MONROE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
FEBRUARY 4, 2025

I. CALL TO ORDER

The Monroe County Board of Commissioners held a Regular Meeting in the City of Monroe, on Tuesday, February 4, 2025. Chairman David Vensel called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

Roll call by Deputy Clerk, Grace Drewior, as follows:

PRESENT			ABSENT
David Hoffman	Jay Heinzerling	David Swartout	Mark Brant
J Henry Lievens	Brian Lamour	David Vensel	
Dawn Asper	Greg Moore, Jr.		

A quorum being present, the Board proceeded to conduct business.

III. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Commissioner Lamour led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chairman Vensel held a moment of silence for the victims of the two horrific plane crashes last week in Washington, D.C. and Philadelphia.

IV. OPENING PRAYER

Deputy Clerk, Grace Drewior led the Opening Prayer.

V. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion by Commissioner Lamour, supported by Vice-Chairman Lievens to approve the January 21, 2025 Regular Meeting Agenda.

Voice vote taken. Motion carried.

VI. APPROVAL OF MINUTES (01/21/2025 Regular Meeting Minutes)

Motion by Vice-Chairman Lievens, supported by Commissioner Swartout to approve the minutes as presented for the January 21, 2025 Regular Meeting and then waived the reading thereof.

Voice vote taken. Motion carried.

VII. PUBLIC COMMENT—

1. Steven Meyer: Mr. Meyer shared his concerns with the resolution adopted at the last meeting regarding local control and related it to Monroe County.

2. Dwayne Dobbs: Mr. Dobbs shared his concerns with Mark Brant’s name being on the board. Mr. Dobbs asked if the board is going to do anything.

VIII. RESOLUTIONS, SPECIAL TRIBUTES & PRESENTATION — None

IX. CLOSED SESSION

1. Closed session to discuss attorney/client privilege and written legal opinion from County Legal Advisor, Phillip Goldsmith, concerning Mark Brant.

Motion by Vice-Chairman Lievens supported by Commissioner Hoffman to go into Closed Session to discuss attorney/client privilege and written legal opinion from County Legal Advisor.

Roll call by Clerk as follows:

AYE			NAY	EXCUSED	ABSTAIN
David Hoffman	David Swartout	David Vensel			
Greg Moore, Jr.	Brian Lamour	Jay Heinzerling			
Dawn Asper	J. Henry Lievens				

Motion carried and Closed Session began at 6:08 p.m.

Motion by Vice-Chairman Lievens, supported by Commissioner Lamour to come out of Closed Session and go back on the record.

Voice vote taken. Motion carried.

Commissioner Lamour stated based upon an analysis of Article II, Sections one (1) and two (2) of the Michigan Constitution of 1963 and applicable sections of Michigan Election Law, it is recognized that Mark Brant was not a qualified elector at the commencement of what was to be his term of office on January 1, 2025, and will not be a qualified elector during the time he remains incarcerated (his published release date from federal prison is February 26, 2026). As a result thereof, Mr. Brant does not meet the legal requirements to hold the office of Monroe County Commissioner for District two (2).

Motion by Commissioner Lamour, supported by Commissioner Hoffman to initiate the process of calling for a special election to provide representation for the citizens of District two (2).

Commissioner Asper shared her opinion that there is no precedent and she believes the board should let the residents make this decision.

Commissioner Moore seconded this. He stated without specific precedent it would make him nervous regarding liability.

Roll call by Clerk as follows:

AYE			NAY	EXCUSED	ABSTAIN
David Hoffman	Jay Heinzerling		David Swartout		
J. Henry Lievens	Brian Lamour		Dawn Asper		
David Vensel			Greg Moore, Jr.		

Motion carried.

Motion by Vice-Chairman Lievens, supported by Commissioner Lamour to release the legal opinion that was the discussion topic of the closed session.

Commissioner Asper, Moore, and Swartout stated they are all for releasing the legal opinion and hopefully it will help the public understand their votes.

Roll call by Clerk as follows:

AYE			NAY	EXCUSED	ABSTAIN
David Hoffman	David Swartout	David Vensel			
Greg Moore, Jr.	Brian Lamour	Jay Heinzerling			
Dawn Asper	J. Henry Lievens				

Motion carried.

X. FINANCE MATTERS

1. Payment of the 02/05/2025 Accounts Payable Claims Report in the amount of $ 756,845.03.

Motion by Vice-Chairman Lievens, supported by Commissioner Hoffman to accept the 02/05/2025 Accounts Payable Claims Report for $ 756,845.03 and approve the Claims for the date and amount presented.

Roll call by Clerk as follows:

AYE			NAY	EXCUSED	ABSTAIN
David Hoffman	David Swartout	David Vensel			
Greg Moore, Jr.	Brian Lamour	Jay Heinzerling			
Dawn Asper	J. Henry Lievens				

Motion carried.

XI. CONSENT AGENDA

1. Approval of Non-Claims.
   a. Check Register dated 01/24/2025 in the amount of $ 436,355.67
   b. Check Register dated 01/31/2025 in the amount of $ 370,800.15

Motion by Commissioner Swartout, supported by Commissioner Lamour to confirm the non-claims payments as presented on the agenda for the dates and amounts listed.

Roll call by Clerk as follows:

AYE			NAY	EXCUSED	ABSTAIN
David Hoffman	David Swartout	David Vensel			
Greg Moore, Jr.	Brian Lamour	Jay Heinzerling			
Dawn Asper	J. Henry Lievens				

Motion carried.

XII. COMMUNICATIONS

1. Letter dated January 24, 2025 from Mike Preadmore, Chief Deputy, requesting approval to accept the allocation from the Bureau of Justice Administration as part of the Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant Program for up to $13,091 of approved costs. There is no local match required.

   Motion by Commissioner Heinzerling, supported by Commissioner Lamour to approve the communication and acceptance of the JAG Grant in the amount of $13,091 with no local match required.

   Roll call by Clerk as follows:

AYE			NAY	EXCUSED	ABSTAIN
David Hoffman	David Swartout	David Vensel			
Greg Moore, Jr.	Brian Lamour	Jay Heinzerling			
Dawn Asper	J. Henry Lievens				

   Motion carried.

2. Letter dated January 27, 2025 from Mr. Andrew Clark, Museum Director, requesting approval to apply for a grant from the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity for up to $1,000,000 with a 100% match from the County of Monroe.

   Andrew Clark and Brian Egen, Chairman of the Museum Board of Trustees, gave a presentation of this project. They explained the history of the Museum as well as the plans for the future. Discussion was held.

   Motion by Commissioner Heinzerling, supported by Commissioner Lamour to approve the application for a grant from the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity for up to $1,000,000 with a 100% match from the County of Monroe.

   Roll call by Clerk as follows:

AYE			NAY	EXCUSED	ABSTAIN
David Hoffman	David Swartout	David Vensel			
Greg Moore, Jr.	Brian Lamour	Jay Heinzerling			
Dawn Asper	J. Henry Lievens				

   Motion carried.

3. Letter dated January 22, 2025 from Mr. David Vensel, Chairman of the Board of Commissioners, providing the 2025 Board of Commissioners Committee appointments.

   Commissioner Asper informed the Board the Area Agency on Aging 1B Board of Directors is now known as AgeWays.

   Motion by Commissioner Swartout, supported by Commissioner Lamour to accept the Chairman's communication and place on file as a permanent record of the 2025 Committee appointments.

Roll call by Clerk as follows:

AYE			NAY	EXCUSED	ABSTAIN
David Hoffman	David Swartout	David Vensel			
Greg Moore, Jr.	Brian Lamour	Jay Heinzerling			
Dawn Asper	J. Henry Lievens				

Motion carried.

XIII. PUBLIC HEARINGS — None

XIV. OLD BUSINESS—

1. Consideration of retaining a law firm to investigate the matter surrounding Mark Brant.

   Motion by Commissioner Lamour, supported by Commissioner Hoffman to authorize the Board Chairman and Board Vice-Chairman to select and retain a law firm on behalf of the County Board to perform an independent investigation concerning the Mark Brant matter, and to establish and approve of the scope of services for the performance of an independent investigation by the law firm concerning the Mark Brant matter, and to enter into a fee agreement letter and/or a letter of engagement setting forth the financial agreement between the law firm and the County.

   Commissioner Asper stated she absolutely cannot support this. She explained that members asked for the scope of the investigation and they have not received that. She elaborated that all the information that is going to be investigated, is already known. She also stated that this investigation is very open ended.

   Commissioner Swartout mentioned the Ad-Hoc Committee and how their report found nothing else to indicate criminal activity beyond the Brant felony. He further explained that we have an answer for each of these questions already. Commissioner Swartout then stated that we are not focused when the 2014 MANTIS investigation from ten (10) years ago is included in this. He finished his comment by saying the public has shared that they do not wish to spend this much money on this.

   Commissioner Hoffman explained the public wants transparency and we want to get this behind us so we can go forward as a team.

   Commissioner Asper stated we have had less transparency and she would like the board to get refocused.

   Commissioner Moore explained he is not against an independent investigation, his concern is removing the decision making authority from the full board and putting it in two members' hands. He elaborated that there should also be a timeline for the investigators to focus on as well.

Roll call by Clerk as follows:

AYE			NAY	EXCUSED	ABSTAIN
David Hoffman	Jay Heinzerling		David Swartout		
J. Henry Lievens	Brian Lamour		Dawn Asper		
David Vensel			Greg Moore, Jr.		

Motion carried.

2. Michigan Indigent Defense Commission/Department update

   Mary Gantzos, MIDC Managing Attorney, updated the Board on new software, programs, and protocol they have put into place.

   Discussion was held.

   Vice-Chairman Lievens suggested leaving this agenda item under old business for another update at the next meeting.

XV. NEW BUSINESS—

1. Consideration of creating a chain of command hierarchy for the County.

   Discussion was held.

   Motion by Commissioner Asper, supported by Vice-Chairman Lievens, to have Michael Bosanac, Administrator/CFO, create an organizational hierarchy and send it to the board.

   Voice vote taken. Motion carries.

XVI. PUBLIC COMMENT—

1. Steven Meyer: Mr. Meyer asked for clarification on the motion made after the closed session. He asked if there is a date for the special election as well as when the legal opinion will be released to the public.

2. Dwayne Dobbs: Mr. Dobbs thanked the board for doing something for the people of District two (2).

3. Sarah Rippee: Ms. Rippee stated the board knew Mark Brant was being investigated the entire time. Ms. Rippee said the board found out in November of 2020. She also stated she is very disappointed in the County.

4. Bill Lavoy: Mr. Lavoy thanked the board for taking some action. Mr. Lavoy stated it is important to know everything that happened in the past to make sure it doesn’t happen again in the future. Mr. Lavoy also stated in the past there were some people who worked for the county and did not inform the board of the information they knew and he heard they are working for the county again.

XVII. ANNOUNCEMENTS—

1. Copies of any Tributes or Certificates issued since the January 21, 2025 meeting: None

XVIII. MEMBERS TIME –

Commissioner Hoffman – Shared the security footage from the Parks&Rec meeting on January sixth (6^{th}).

Commissioner Moore – Stated he was excited for the Museum Project. Went there as a kid and always thought it was cool. Commissioner Moore also read aloud Amy Richardson's letter she turned into the board. This letter stated as a taxpayer, she does not approve of their funds being used for the investigation of Mark Brant.

Commissioner Swartout – Passed.

Commissioner Lamour – Stated he was also excited for the Museum project. Explained he hopes there is a parking problem because that suggests we have a lot more people coming downtown. States he is looking forward to everything in the future for that project.

Commissioner Heinzerling – Passed.

Commissioner Asper – Explains she thought the Museum presentation was very exciting. Suggested that the board gets refocused on policies and by-laws. States she did not know about Mark Brant in November. Commissioner Asper also shared how prisons have classes for inmates and a teacher of these classes handed it over to Mark to teach it because he was so knowledgeable. Reminded the public, two things can be true at the same time. You can be extraordinary and have a mess in your life.

Vice-Chairman Lievens – Stated he is also excited about the museum project and hopefully we can get the parking figured out so it is accessible to the folks that want to enjoy it.

Chairman Vensel – Stated that we are in the midst of extremely difficult work where difficult decisions have to be made. We will continue to try to do our best as we move forward.

XIX. ADJOURNMENT - Chairman Vensel adjourned the meeting at 7:57 p.m. with no further business to discuss.

Respectfully submitted by:

Grace Drewior

Grace Drewior
Deputy Clerk/Administrative Assistant
Monroe County Board of Commissioners