



# COUNTY OF OSCODA

## BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Mr. Charles E. Varner, Jr, Chairman  
Ms. Jackie Bondar  
Mr. Joe Breough

Mr. Tom McCauley, Vice Chairman  
Mr. Ted Handrich

Telephone (989) 826-1130

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Mio Community Center, 305 9<sup>th</sup> Street, Mio, MI 48647

### Official Minutes March 10, 2026

A Regular Meeting of the Oscoda County Board of Commissioner’s was held on **Tuesday, March 10, 2026 at 10:00 a.m.** open to the public; in compliance with Michigan Legislature requirements and as allowed by Public Act 228 of 2020, Open Meetings Act (Excerpt) Act 267 of 1976, MCL - Section 15.263, from the Mio Community Center, 305 9<sup>th</sup> Street, Mio, MI 48647.

#### A. Call to Order

Commissioner Varner called today’s “Public Meeting” to order at 10:00 a.m.

#### B. Invocation and/or Pledge

Pledge to the Flag

#### C. Roll Call of Board Members

Roll Call of Members:

Members Present:	Commissioners Varner, Breough, Handrich and McCauley
Members Excused:	Commissioner Bondar
Public Present:	6
Public by Teleconference:	Unavailable
Zoom Participants:	Unavailable

#### D. Approval of Agenda:

The B.O.C approved the Agenda for **March 10, 2026**, as presented.

Breough/McCauley 2026-064 a motion to approve the agenda for **March 10, 2026**, B.O.C Regular Meeting, as presented, with one addition to Financial.

4 yes: 0 no: **Motion Carried.**

#### E. Approval of the Consent Calendar:

The B.O.C. approved the Consent Calendar Items for **March 10, 2026**.

Handrich/Breough 2026-065 a motion to approve the Consent Calendar Items for **March 10, 2026**.

**Item #1** Unofficial Minutes for **February 24, 2026**, as presented.

**Item #2** Claims and Audit Docket for **March 10, 2026**, as received from the

County Clerk's Office in the amount of \$91,517.05.

**Roll Call Vote:** Breaugh, yes; Handrich, yes; McCauley, yes; Varner, yes. **Motion Carried.**

F. Public Matters & Comments (Limited to three minutes per person)

N/A

G. Appointments:

N/A

H. Correspondence/Reports/Resolutions:

- 1) Ms. Michelle Knepp, County Administrator/HR Director – Government Center Repair Update

Michelle Knepp, County Administrator/HR Director provided an update regarding the damages and repair status. We are currently waiting for estimates to be finalized for damages and repairs. A meeting took place on Friday, March 6, 2026, involving the insurance company and contractors to review scope and costs. Repairs will commence as soon as the insurance company finalizes the approval.

I. Unfinished Business/New Business:

- 1) Ms. Deb Coulon, EDC Board Chair – EDC Board Members

Handrich/McCauley  
**2026-066**

a motion to accept the letter of interest and to recommend to the Chair of the Board of Commissioners, with the advice and consent of the County Board of Commissioners, shall appoint the members of the Board of Directors, the appointment of Ms. Christine Curley, as a board member to the Oscoda County Economic Development Corporation & Brownfield Board, for the five-year term expiring December 31, 2030, per Section 125.1604, Economic Development Corporations Act 338 of 1974.

4 yes: 0 no: **Motion Carried.**

McCauley/Handrich  
**2026-067**

a motion to accept and to recommend to the Chair of the Board of Commissioners, with the advice and consent of the County Board of Commissioners, shall appoint the members of the Board of Directors, the re-appointment of Ms. Ashley Morris, as a board member to the Oscoda County Economic Development Corporation & Brownfield Board, for the seven-year term expiring December 31, 2033, per Section 125.1604, Economic Development Corporations Act 338 of 1974.

4 yes: 0 no: **Motion Carried.**

- 2) Mr. Tom Pratt, Court Administrator – Trial Court Staffing

Breaugh/McCauley  
**2026-068**

a motion to acknowledge the resignation of Ms. Heidi VanWagner, part-time temporary non-union District Court Clerk effective Friday, February 20, 2026.

4 yes: 0 no: **Motion Carried.**

Handrich/McCauley  
**2026-069**

a motion to acknowledge the resignation of Ms. Heather Blundell, full-time non-union District Civil Clerk effective Wednesday, March 4, 2026.

4 yes: 0 no: **Motion Carried.**

J. Financial:

- 1) Ms. Michelle Knepp, County Administrator/HR Director – Alternative Gas Supplier

McCauley/Handrich a motion to authorize Ms. Michelle Knepp, County Administrator/HR Director to  
**2026-070** terminate the natural gas supply contract with Volunteer Energy by providing the required 30-day written notice and to transition the account to DTE Energy for regulated gas supply service effective immediately.

**Roll Call Vote:** McCauley, yes; Varner, yes; Breaugh, yes; Handrich, yes. **Motion Carried.**

*Addition*

- 2) Tri-Town Fire Department Equipment Proposal Discussion

Fire Chief Kevin Marino has proposed the acquisition of new battery-operated Jaws of Life equipment, a move deemed necessary to handle modern, high-strength vehicle materials and improve emergency response times. The proposed equipment, supported by EMS Director Robert Stankiewicz, is estimated to cost approximately \$46,000. The current equipment is inadequate for cutting modern, hardened materials in vehicle extrications, making high-force, specialized tools critical for safety and efficiency. Treasurer William Kendall noted that a current budget deficit makes direct funding for the full amount difficult. Commissioner Varner proposed a 50/50 cost-sharing agreement with the County and suggested using mutual aid from surrounding counties in the interim. Other brands with lower price tags were discussed. While Commissioners expressed support for the upgrade, the item is still under review. The Board has directed the Fire Department and County Administrator to collaborate on a viable cost-sharing solution for the high-quality equipment recommended by Fire Chief Kevin Marino.

K. Public Comments (Limited to three minutes per person):

William Kendall, Treasurer provided the status of the Tax Foreclosure Litigation and provided an update on tax foreclosures following a recent U.S. Supreme Court ruling. Legal counsel is currently viewed as having acted in favor of the entity's interests. The final ruling on related lawsuits is anticipated in June or July 2026. A drafted settlement agreement has been halted for the time being. The Treasurer stated that he has maintained a conservative financial approach. A specific pool of funds has been established and set aside to cover potential settlement costs. Current lawsuits are seeking payouts based on fair market value, a demand the Treasurer characterized as unrealistic. The next steps will be to monitor for the court ruling expected in Summer 2026 and await further updates from legal counsel regarding the paused settlement agreement.

L. Committee Reports:

Commissioner McCauley:

- Attended District Library Board Meeting
  - The library staff is conducting a systematic review of the collection to ensure all materials remain accurate, current, and relevant to the community's needs; and
  - They opened for the first time this past Saturday and had very few people who came into the library. They are planning to increase awareness and hopeful to see an increase of visitors.
- AuSable Valley Natural River Zone Review Board
  - Efforts to increase fish habitat along the AuSable River.
- Attended Michigan Township Association (MTA) Board Meeting

- The Veterans Affairs department attended and spoke about the coffee social event and sharing the benefits offered to the veterans in the community. Statistics show that Oscoda County currently has approximately 800 veterans in our County, of which our local office services approximately 100 of those veterans.
- Attended Oscoda County Road Commission Meeting

Commissioner Breagh:

- Attended Council on Aging Board Meeting
  - Discussion regarding the purchase of property
- Attended Chamber of Commerce Board Meeting
  - Actively working to recruit new participants into the Chamber of Commerce.

Commissioner Handrich:

- Attended M.O.A Landfill Authority Board Meeting
- Attended EDC & Brownfield Board Meeting
  - The board has achieved "tremendous strides" in organizational efficiency and strategic direction. Diligence remains a priority as the board actively works on continuous improvement initiatives to better serve the County and business owners.
- Reviewed Claims & Audit
- Mackinac County Circuit Court Tour w/Craig Froggett, Clark Construction

Commissioner Varner:

- Attended Wellvance Board Meeting
- Reviewed Claims & Audit
- Attended Northeast Michigan Community Service Agency (NEMSCA) Board Meeting, Gaylord, MI
- Mackinac County Circuit Court Tour w/Craig Froggett, Clark Construction
- Planning to attend M.O.A Landfill Authority Board Meeting

M. Adjournment:

Handrich/McCauley a motion to adjourn today’s meeting at 10:42 am.

**2026-071**

4 yes: 0 no: **Motion Carried.**

The Board of Commissioners will hold their next scheduled “Regular B.O.C Meeting” on **Tuesday, March 24, 2026 at 10:00 a.m.** held in the Oscoda County Courthouse Annex, 105 S. Court Street, Mio Michigan 48647.

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**Charles E Varner, Jr., Oscoda County  
Board of Commissioners Chairman**

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**Libby Marsh-Shephard, Oscoda County  
Clerk & Register of Deeds**