

Leelanau County Board of Commissioners
Committee of the Whole – Wednesday, January 3, 2024
Approved Minutes 2/20/2024

Proceedings of the meeting are being recorded (audio and video). The video of the meeting can be found at the following link:
<https://www.leelanau.gov/meetingdetails.asp?MAId=2623#video>

Meeting called to order by Chairman Ty Wessell at 1:00 p.m. Today's meeting is being held at the Government Center, 8527 E. Government Center Drive, Suttons Bay, Michigan.

The Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America and the moment of silence was dispensed with because it was recited at the prior meeting.

Roll Call:	District #1	Jamie Kramer	PRESENT
	#2	James O'Rourke	PRESENT
	#3	Doug Rexroat	PRESENT
	#4	Ty Wessell	PRESENT
	#5	Kama Ross	PRESENT
	#6	Gwenne Allgaier	PRESENT
	#7	Melinda C. Lautner	PRESENT

Guests present.

Approval of the Agenda / Late Additions or Deletions:

MOTION BY REXROAT THAT THE LEELANAU COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS APPROVE THE AGENDA AS PRESENTED. SECONDED BY O'ROURKE.

Discussion – none.

AYES – 7 (Rexroat, Ross, Wessell, Allgaier, Kramer, Lautner, O'Rourke)

NO – 0

MOTION CARRIED.

Public Comment: (3 minutes)

The following individual spoke in person: Susan Wheaton; Barbara Schneider; Linda Ackley; and Kerry O'Non.

Commissioner Comment:

None.

Action Item for Discussion/Potential Recommendation:

Organizational Culture Survey Results – Michigan Leadership Institute:

HR Director Darcy Weaver and Dr. John Scholten, MLI consultant, were present for the agenda item. Scholten recapped the survey he performed for the Board of Commissioners.

The MLI Employee Climate/Culture Survey and Study can be found at the following link:

https://www.leelanau.gov/downloads/mli_survey_results_01032024.pdf

Scholten stated his background and his credentials to perform the survey and said he received direction from both HR Director Weaver and Commissioner Kama Ross in regards to customizing the process.

Scholten covered each page of the Leelanau County Climate/Culture Study with the Board of Commissioners. The study included the questions asked in person or online depending on the employee's choice to participate in the study. He explained the following; "Positives"; "Response Rate of 85 out of 117 employees"; "Scale Score of 3.8 with one being broken and ten being healthy"; "Challenges"; "Top Issue(s)", and "Moving Forward".

Scholten further explained to the Board of Commissioners, while reminding them, numerous times the study is from the employee's perspective, which is perceived as their reality and doesn't mean it is true. Scholten asked questions directly to County Clerk Michelle L. Crocker, who responded.

Commissioner O'Rourke thanked employees for participating in the survey.

Commissioner Allgaier thanked employees for participating in the survey and acknowledged that certain things like the Finance Department changes takes time.

Commissioner Rexroat thanked all of the employees and team members that gave input. He continued that perception is reality to the person with the perception. If the perception is wrong, then the communication is wrong, and so those two things work hand in hand. He continued that if you want to change perception, then you need to communicate better or listen better and then you know that you need to change your perception of the situation.

Commissioner Kramer asked if Scholten could explain the process in which you divided the data and did you glean any quantitative data? Do you have any of that information from using survey monkey and how exactly did you extrapolate this scientifically? Scholten replied that he informed the Board at the onset that it was going to be more quantitative, which the Board seemed to understand, and that the closest to quantitative would be the direct survey monkey. However, to the approach of scrubbing, it was an old-fashioned kind of tallying, where he looked for commonality and where he looked for things making the most points as the most important things. He said there were a good number of outlier comments that were single things out there but when it came to 117 employees, he didn't see that the "one commenter" needed to be put into the report, so he didn't. He confirmed that he did not use a software system or anything like that to do it.

Commissioner Ross stated that she would just like to say that she will have to digest the changes in the structure for committees, but that she does promise as the Chair of the Personnel Committee, if given the task by the full Board, she will go "full-fledged" on these recommendations and trying to figure out, with experts within the community, how we can professionally make some positive changes. She said that she is ready and she anxiously awaits the consensus of the Board to help the Board move forward as quickly as possible.

Commissioner Lautner thanked Scholten for the report. She said that she thinks she hardly knows where to start, but she thinks that if someone does delve into the report that you are absolutely right about perception and quite often communication is the key. Lautner continued

that the County has not looked at a wage study in general or in whole in a while, but has looked at individual positions. She said this isn't the first time she has heard that the perception is the employees need more money, but the bottom line is our lowest paid employee, with benefits, works out to about \$50.00 an hour. Lautner further explained it is the number one task of being a County Commissioner is to control the budget and the use of the County's tax dollars.

Commissioner Lautner continued that within the last two weeks she has heard from a number of employees and these employees are telling her that they are alarmed, disturbed and concerned because they think this building is absolutely out of control. She said for her that this survey could be run every two weeks and that it would be very interesting to see what the results would be and what the questions would be. Lautner stated that she voted no on having this survey and one employee asked her why she voted no on receiving the results. She said to the employee that they misunderstood why she voted no for the survey to be done by MLI and explained to them that the process broke Board policy by hiring MLI, which has been alluded to. Lautner continued that she sticks to policies and procedures and it was a very unfair thing for the Board, to do both to those not on the Personal Committee and to the public. She stated there is some homework that needs to be done in reading the study but she thinks communication is key. Lautner said that in regards to the questions that were asked she thinks they are very interesting but that there could have been more questions asked that would have given the Board more information. She stated that she encourages the employees to keep calling because she is learning a lot.

Scholten stated that an important piece of the study is communication and where you can approve things is better communication from Administration to the Board. He continued that they tried to use open ended questions so that it doesn't lead or guide people.

Commissioner Kramer said this feels a lot like therapy and it gets really uncomfortable for everyone who is involved. She stated she likes the idea of governance training because she thinks it will be invaluable and that this Board does need to learn how to do that. Kramer commented she hopes that there is discussion moving forward because we cannot perceive the things that the employees are perceiving and vice versa, the employees can't see what we see. She continued that when the Board goes into closed session or the Board has interactions with people then you (the employees) aren't sure where the Board is coming from or why the Board is doing what they are doing. Kramer said she hopes the Board can improve from a 3.8.

Scholten said he thinks the commitment to the first step is the recommendations he has outlined. He commented that with effort on the part of the Board to use the recommendations that then a year from now his firm can come back and do another survey using the same questions and he is certain if the Board shows concerted effort the 3.8 will go up.

Chairman Wessell thanked MLI for a useful report and that he will continue to focus on this.

Public Comment: (5 minutes)

The following individuals spoke in person: Deb Allen; Charlene Verschaeve; Rick Robbins; and Mike McMillan.

Commissioner Comments:

- Commissioner Allgaier said that when a major change is made in an organization with the creation of new departments and the division of one of the most important things that happens here, that it takes planning. She continued that you take the action after you know you have looked at work flow, you talk to people and you create a plan on how to carry forward and do it in an orderly way. She commented that the Finances of our County are our bedrock and had this been planned it would have gone better, along with had there been timelines and plans, but instead it was a like a grenade going off. Allgaier stated there was a simultaneous problem, in that, for years and years and years there has been a policy to not pay people, which she has always decried. She commented that the County does not have tons of money lying around, so it's a real conundrum, and she is concerned that people still don't trust and that worries her and she wants to understand why people don't trust. Yes, we have stumbled in creating a Finance Department and, while we stumble, the Board still has to make sure the books stay healthy. The Board has to make sure we are paying our bills and that we get through our audits. Allgaier stated she hopes people will come to trust that yes, we have stumbled, but that the Board has the intention to do this and that the employees can come to trust that. She continued there is the intention to follow-through and maybe it doesn't look like it sometimes, but we will keep trying to do better. She said she does appreciate people's voices.

- Commissioner Kramer said that piggy backing on Commissioner Allgaier's statement that she knows very well, and that everyone else does too that trust is definitely something you earn and we have to build that trust, which is our responsibility. Trust is a two-way street and she is hoping that we can help facilitate more of that as we further our discussions and we really communicate what we just learned and integrate all of the new information and data that this Board is just seeing. Thank you.

Adjournment:

Meeting adjourned by Chairman Wessell at 2:41 p.m.

Ty Wessell, Chairman
Leelanau County Board of Commissioners

Michelle L. Crocker, Leelanau County Clerk
Clerk, Leelanau County Board of Commissioners