

**Leelanau County Board of Commissioners
Special Session – Friday, June 14, 2024**

Tentative Minutes

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=2752#video>

Meeting called to order by Chairman Ty Wessell at 10:01 a.m.

Today's meeting is being held at the Government Center, 8527 E. Government Center Drive, Suttons Bay, Michigan.

Pledge of Allegiance/Moment of Silence:

The Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America was recited and followed by a Moment of Silence.

<u>Roll Call:</u>	District #1	Jamie Kramer	ABSENT (prior notice)
	#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.

Public Comment: (3 minutes, agenda specific)

The following individual spoke in person: Jill Wellman.

Commissioner Comment:

None.

Purpose of Meeting – Discussion/Potential Action:

County Administrator/CFO Candidate Dialogue:

Chairman Wessell stated that per the direction of the Board that he and MLI Consultant Chet Janik did reach out to those listed as references on the final two candidates. He commented that both he and Janik made phone calls and had good conversation with there being a lot of very positive feedback. Wessell announced that yesterday he met with both Interim County Administrator Richard Lewis and Janik with there being discussion that if the Board didn't decide to go forward right now then would Lewis be willing to stay on and allow the next Board of Commissioners to make the appointment of an Administrator with that process starting later yet this year. Wessell restated that he asked Lewis if he would allow the Board to put that out on the table because between the two of them (Belsky & Belcher) we have exactly what we need.

Chairman Wessell said that as he talked with references and discussed with Janik that the skill set for the one position was just not there. He stated that he will let Janik reference that today. He commented that there doesn't need to be a decision made today but that he thinks that is an option if we wanted to do that as Mr. Lewis would be willing to stay on and continue the process of moving us forward.

MLI Consultant Chet Janik explained that he called the four candidates that were the finalists and the two that were passed up on wanted to thank the Board of their opportunity to interview. Janik stated that he called Belcher and Belsky to receive permission to contact any references, which they agreed to. He said that he and Chairman Wessell split the list between them when contacting the references.

Chairman Wessell and Janik further explained to the Board their conversations with both candidates references and discussed the pros and cons of each of the candidates.

Commissioner Rexroat stated that previously his comments are not about the qualifications or the quality of the individuals but that his concern is about the fit in the County and the fit to the position. He said when we crafted this Administrator/Chief Finance Officer position we were looking for someone to help the Board get through the creation of a Finance Department, which has been stumbled on and the Board has not done well with it. Rexroat continued that he thinks that is what the Board was seeking; however, it was mentioned that the person this Board is looking for is a unicorn, who will be a very rare individual who can do that. He commented that it is his understanding that Richard Lewis is doing a good job with all of the staff and all of the people involved in this process and that Lewis has the respect of them and perhaps right now Lewis is that unicorn. Rexroat said he would be comfortable continuing on with Lewis and then maybe if the Finance Department gets created and Lewis has the skill set and relationships with the people to do it, then we aren't looking for a unicorn after that and instead we are then just looking for a good Administrator. He stated when looking at the two remaining candidates he personally doesn't think that candidate Belsky is a fit for this County, and he doesn't think we have the finance information with candidate Belcher that the County needs. Rexroat continued it seems to him that right now the Board does have someone seated in that position with Lewis, who can get the Board through this issue, and maybe the Board won't have to find the unicorn and maybe we can swing back to a County Administrator position. He stated that Lewis appears to be hitting the notes here with the staff to get us through the mess, which is his summation of where he is at in this whole process, because he would have trouble supporting either candidate right now. Rexroat commented that his lack of support isn't because of any lack of their individual qualifications.

Commissioner Allgaier stated that she respects Commissioner Rexroat's feelings on fit. She said she does believe that candidate Belsky would be a fit for a whole lot of people in the County and for what is going on in the world right now. She said we desperately need fresh ideas on housing and innovation, along with some things that we don't have a budget for and that we don't want to have our taxpayers have to pay for. Allgaier commented she heard from candidate Belsky that he is someone who knows how to access the world out there to bring in resources so the Board doesn't have to ask the taxpayers. She also hears that maybe he feels like he has too many ideas, but on the other hand we may benefit from those ideas and some of that awareness of what is available to us to bring home to help us keep moving. She also hears that there is discomfort and not support for all of this going forward right now. Allgaier stated she liked candidate Belcher except he just doesn't have the qualifications we are asking for so that would be unfair to our last Administrator to go out and find someone with those same qualifications and it would invalidate what we have done. Allgaier commented that if we don't have consensus than we don't have consensus, but candidate Belsky sure seems dedicated and can bring us the tools this County needs.

Commissioner Ross stated she agrees with Commissioner Allgaier and Commissioner Rexroat so far, but after talking with staff yesterday and some constituents she feels like we are in a good place at this moment and she isn't really sure about going anywhere different. She continued that it feels like this conversation is strange because we are talking about this person that is in the building right now and we have not heard from him (Lewis) about his commitment for the number of extra months or a year, whatever that may be that he would offer to the Board. Ross commented that to make a decision on assuming that he (Lewis) is going to be here for us is a little uncomfortable for her. She stated that if she was to concentrate on the two candidates right now, she does agree that candidate Belcher does not have the Finance, which seems to be what everyone can agree on that is pretty black and white, and that candidate Belsky has a lot of strengths and a lot of interest in this position. Ross said that shouldn't be taken lightly, especially, with someone who has done so much in his lifetime and is interested in bringing it to Leelanau County would be a gift. She continued that whether it is the right time for the County is something she is struggling with and until the Board can figure out the bigger picture. She commented there is definitely consensus with staff and constituents that she spoke with that Interim Administrator Lewis is providing some stability and some real strength amongst the employees and an overall good feeling in general, which you would kind of hate to lose that unless it is for someone that the Board knows is going to be super good and if the Board can't agree as one on that, then maybe Mr. Belsky's time with us is not right for right now.

Commissioner Rexroat asked if anyone knows what Interim Administrator Lewis's plans are?

Chairman Wessell replied that he spoke with Lewis and asked him that if the Board does not decide on moving forward at this time would he be willing to re-negotiate a contract directly with the Board to continue in his current role until the Board is ready to make a decision, which might be until the end of the year or even start the process in November and conclude it after the new Board will be seated, if that is what this group decides to do. Wessell and Janik both stated that Interim Administrator Lewis is open to that option. Janik explained he believed the terms would be very similar to what was previously agreed on.

Commissioner Lautner stated she thinks this has been a different process, because the candidates we looked at were all just so different in their skill sets and their personalities. She said the only thing that concerned her about candidate Belsky was his ambition, which the Board has talked about fit and type "A" personalities. Lautner commented her concern is that could he slow down enough to be that fit for Leelanau County, which that really was the only thing she was unsure about. candidate Belsky's skill level is there she felt and he certainly does love Leelanau County and the Board could see that passion during his interviews. She said she doesn't think that she is ready to dismiss him outright, so her thought process is could the Board consider him returning a third time?

Janik responded that both candidates would like the opportunity to come back and spend a day with staff and have more time with Commissioners.

Commissioner Lautner commented she likes the idea of candidate Belsky doing that and would like to go one step further with an option of where Interim Administrator Lewis works together with candidate Belsky, and perhaps Lewis could stay on in a reduced capacity and still have his expertise and guidance. She stated she wishes Lewis wasn't retired because he could have the

full-time job then as Administrator, but this is where we are at. She doesn't want to rush this, but on the other hand doesn't want to lose a good candidate like candidate Belsky.

Chairman Wessell announced that he invited Commissioner Kramer to submit public comment and said that he did not receive anything. Wessell confirmed with County Clerk Michelle L. Crocker that she did not receive any public comment from Kramer. He stated that the meeting may be adjourned to verify that the Clerk's Office hasn't received public comment from Commissioner Kramer.

Commissioner O'Rourke said this seems kind of ironic that this was all started before this Board took office, and now this Board is possibly kicking it down the road until the next Board starts. He commented he sees the whole job description as Administrator/CFO as apples and oranges and Commissioner Lautner mentioned a unicorn, along with Commissioner Rexroat, and he doesn't think the job can be done 100% by one person. O'Rourke stated that candidate Belcher is a great leader and a friend of his and yes, he does not have the experience. He said in his honest opinion, which he will get phone calls tonight about, is to hire candidate Belcher and put the Finance back in the County Clerk's Office under Michelle Crocker. He commented that a previous Board put this on this Board, which was a four (4) to three (3) vote. He explained that he doesn't like to leave any job saying that he didn't do the job or didn't do the work and he stated he is leaving this position in six months. He said he thought when he ran for this office that he would help do better and there is nothing wrong with candidate Belsky, who reminds him of the upper-level administration of the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) where you send one email to them and get two emails back. O'Rourke commented he doesn't think candidate Belsky is the correct fit for Leelanau County, although he is a very qualified individual. He continued that he is really confused about all of this and if this doesn't work out it then it should move back to the County Clerk's Office.

Commissioner Rexroat stated he would like to comment on Commissioner O'Rourke's statements besides the phone call he will be giving Commissioner O'Rourke tonight.

Commissioner Allgaier stated she is speechless and believes the Board needs to move forward. She continued that the point she would like to make is to complete this process by the end of this term and does not believe the Board should lay this on a brand-new board. She said when people start here it is a lot to expect them to go into a hiring process when they are trying to figure out how to make a motion or remember how to make a motion. Allgaier commented that she is not putting any one down who might be elected, but there is a lot to learn in this job. If we do hold off, she thinks there is an opportunity with candidate Belsky, but if we do hold off, she does appreciate Interim Richard Lewis staying on, and she wishes he was 10 years younger, but he is not and he is really dedicated to his 22 grandchildren. If Lewis will help us and we can commit to finishing this by the end of our term than she would support that given the fact that we seem to be unsure at this point and he is doing excellent, excellent work.

Commissioner Ross said she agrees with Commissioner Allgaier's comments but as a new Commissioner 18 months ago and if her first big decision was to hire a County Administrator, she thinks that would be pretty overwhelming for her. She continued that she would not wish that decision on somebody else on this Board, so she agrees with Allgaier on that and this is all six months away. Ross stated she has a question for Janik, or the Board, that if we ask Interim Administrator Lewis were to stay on, but do we open up the process again and ask for new

applications since there doesn't seem to be a 100% agreement that candidate Belsky is the next best fit for Leelanau County and does that all need to be discussed today or does the Board have different options? Do we put candidate Belsky on hold, which doesn't seem quite respectful or are we interested in opening up the process again and looking for other candidates is that what we are saying?

Chairman Wessell stated that his purpose in reaching out to Interim Administrator Lewis was just to make sure that we could come here today knowing that we did not have to make a quick decision if we couldn't agree.

Commissioner Rexroat commented that he would like to follow-up on Commissioner O'Rourke's comments that he is "100% opposed" to that option just to make himself clear. He continued that to address Commissioner O'Rourke's comments finishing what was started and the big thing we are trying to finish is a creation of a Finance Department, which is the unfinished business as well. Rexroat stated that if Interim Administrator Lewis can get that done then he would suggest to the Board that maybe we are not looking for an Administrator/CFO and are looking for an Administrator, which changes the equation. He re-iterated that to him he goes back to the whole process and if he looks at the recommendations of the Finance Committee then how do we dig out of this loop of not being able to get the Finance Department right. The recommendation came from the Finance Committee to create the position of County Administrator/CFO to help get this Finance Department done and over with so that this pain would go away. Rexroat stated that Interim Administrator Lewis has the respect and the things to get that part done, so the Board would not be shirking our duties because we would be getting that part done. As far as the process on the next person it would be different because he would look at almost every candidate differently if he was only looking for an Administrator and if we get Finance Department up and running and headed in the right direction, he is not convinced that we need the Administrator/CFO part of the job description. He will agree with you that it is very difficult to find someone that is going to be able to do both jobs because there are certain personality traits that make people who are good with numbers aren't always good with people and people who are good with people aren't always good with numbers, which isn't a universal thing it's just his life experience thing. He commented that he can go back to this "unicorn" thing and that we have him right now as Interim Administrator Lewis to lead us through to get through the Finance Department creation. Rexroat continued that he right now, outside of that, these are two wonderful people each with their own set of different skills, but with the idea to continue to look for an Administrator/CFO that he can't support either one of them right now. He said he does like the idea of getting this done and going in another direction with having a County Administrator.

Commissioner Allgaier said she would like to make one more comment because she hears Commissioner Rexroat and it does make sense. In a county the Clerk's Office is very powerful and the Clerk has to sign things that go to the State of Michigan and the Clerk's Office is often a target. The Clerk's Office here in Leelanau County has had a huge target for people and frankly part of the reason that she endorses the idea of the County Administrator/CFO was to partially get some of the target off the back of the Clerk's Office. If Leelanau County has a County Administrator/CFO, who could be more of a resource and could really kind of protect the Clerk's Office from so much of the negative targeting they have gotten. Allgaier continued that long term that could remain valid because in a way we put ourselves right back where we started and that is if the Finance Department has a problem, question, or needs guidance then they

have to go the Clerk's Office instead to the CFO. You will never remove the Clerk because they still have to sign things, but if we can get some of the negative crap away from the Clerk's Office with more separation there, maybe their lives would be a little better.

Chairman Wessell commented that he heard three people say that they were impressed with at least two of the candidates that were interviewed, which were the two finalists, and that his own personal thought is that we wouldn't want to start totally over, but leave them in the mix. He said he thinks they are two good people and the references prove that; but he thinks that we're going to have a hard time finding a candidate that all seven of us believe is the right fit for this position right now. Wessell stated he hasn't heard from Commissioner Kramer but the County Clerk has verified that there has been no public correspondence from her.

Commissioner O'Rourke said he doesn't want to but that he has to agree with Commissioner Rexroat. He commented to get the Finance Department established and then get the Administrator. It is apples and oranges and "you" have two options in the candidates or put it back to the Clerk's Office. He stated he knows he will get more phone calls with regards to his statements today and commented that Interim Administrator Lewis is an outstanding individual. O'Rourke thinks that since Lewis is retired that he is doing this out of the goodness of his heart. Things are running really well right now so let's see what we can do 30 days or 60 days.

Commissioner Ross commented that to follow up on the point about once the Finance Department is off and running, functioning well that we still have the Finance Director reporting directly to the Administrator, correct? So, she is not sure that she agrees with anyone totally on the fact that we don't really want a strong person with the Administrator/CFO position to oversee that Finance Department in its infancy. Ross continued that she still does not feel comfortable with candidate Belcher and his background in finance overseeing a brand-new department.

Commissioner Allgaier commented there will also be a brand-new system.

Commissioner Ross continued yes, a brand-new system but the department is not fully developed. She stated she thinks the CFO portion of the position is really an important part of what we are looking for.

Commissioner Allgaier stated that we have to remember that we are not just talking about getting the people in and that we are talking about transitioning to a whole new system, and that is why there was another reason for a CFO. If we are going to go to BS&A Software, or whatever, then this is a two-to-three-year process and we need somebody to oversee that who knows what they are doing and so, it is not just getting the people hired.

Chairman Wessell stated Commissioner Lautner commented earlier about a third interview and he asked her to speak more about that because he did not hear anybody else pick up on it.

Commissioner Lautner stated she did listen closely if there was any support from her suggestion and that she really does think a day with candidate Belsky could tell us a lot one way or another. She continued that with everything she is hearing, the Board is saying to move forward with Finance then candidate Belsky would have that ability to move us forward with finance. Lautner said candidate Belsky also would oversee that process as it got going and then

obviously, as that got firmly entrenched, he would be able to concentrate on Administration only. It would be at a much slower pace than what he is used to, but she thinks that is exactly what he is looking for in this stage of his life and career. Perhaps a third interview would tell us more firmly yes or no. It would be really great if he could come and spend a couple days or a Friday with us or a Monday with us to include the weekend up here to meet more people here and really get to know how people. Lautner stated that it certainly wouldn't hurt to ask.

Commissioner Rexroat stated that by having a third interview, it wouldn't change his position; but if it is this Board's will to do that, then he would endorse it. Would it be possible to have one on one meetings with the candidates? Janik replied this needs to be in an open forum but the Board could get legal opinion.

Commissioner Ross asked if the staff would be able to meet with candidate Belsky one on one and Janik replied, yes.

Commissioner Rexroat requested the County Clerk to contact Cohl, Stoker & Toskey, P.C. and inquire about one-on-one interviews with each commissioner.

Commissioner Ross stated she would really like to see more input from the staff and Elected Officials.

Janik explained that each Board of Commissioners chooses their own path and it is what you agree on.

Chairman Wessell wanted to take issue with something that Commissioner O'Rourke said when he mentioned that Interim Administrator Lewis is doing this out of a sense of commitment, but Lewis told him (Wessell) and Janik that he is having a ball.

Janik stated that Interim Administrator Lewis told him privately, as well as publicly, is that as long as he is seeing the Board making progress with an end goal of hiring someone that he is willing to stay on. Janik commented he doesn't want to put words in Lewis's mouth but as long as he is seeing progress, which he reaffirmed yesterday, that there is a plan to get someone on board and no matter what that plan is reasonably he is willing to stay through the process.

Chairman Wessell asked the Board if they would be open to putting this on hold until after summer and into the fall of the year when the budget is finalized, vacations are over, and then bring the finalists back and anyone else we might want to bring back? He stated all we need to know is that we don't have to rush.

Commissioner Allgaier said it wouldn't be fair to bring candidate Belcher back because he doesn't have the qualifications and that would not be fair to him. She stated that Belcher might make a great administrator but we need a CFO/Administrator. If we were to bring candidate Belsky back, then it's only bringing one person back and we are not ready to make a decision, then that is not fair to him either. She continued that she would be ok with moving forward except we can't start in September because it won't be done until after December.

Janik explained it would be up to the Board on how fast to move because when Missaukee County was looking, there was an internal candidate, who was the County Clerk, and the

Missaukee County board wanted someone to oversee the Finance Department and put a finance stamp on everything but not do the day to day so they hired her as the Administrator/CFO. He further explained that in Kalkaska County when they were searching for an Administrator/CFO that since their finance staff had been outsourced the last ten years, they needed someone to do the day to do work. He said that even between counties that are relatively close to each other they are different setups with the same Administrator/CFO title with different expectations. Missaukee is more of a review of finances and Kalkaska is doing the work.

Commissioner Allgaier asked if we can put this off until August and send out another query again? Janik replied that it would depend on which position you are going to hire for. Commissioner Allgaier continued that she wants the CFO part because we hired Sean Cowan to oversee going to a different financial software system and we have to remember that is what our goal was.

Chairman Wessell said he would like to ask of the Board if we can get opinions from County Clerk Michelle L. Crocker, Chief Deputy Jennifer Zywicki, County Treasurer John A. Gallagher III, and Human Resources Director Heather Cade because he would like to give them the opportunity if the Board would allow for them to make a comment on this. Chairman Wessell received consensus from the Board to proceed.

County Clerk Michelle L. Crocker said she would like to respond first to the last comment that was made. The prior Finance Director Sean Cowan, that Commissioner Allgaier referenced, as a reminder was hired on a solo interview with perhaps not a full picture clearly stated with a different objective by the person (County Administrator Deborah Allen) that hired him. She continued that having had the experience of working with Cowan, who was a wonderful individual, but was someone who was hired under a different expectation than what everyone else here was aware of. She stated Interim Administrator Richard Lewis is doing a very nice job. We all know that we are here today because of a very poorly thought-out plan, which has been driven by a four to three vote, but than a fifth commissioner joined in. Crocker commented this is a self-made problem but she thinks right now with your current Interim Administrator, without giving all of her thoughts about the situation, and that Interim Administrator Lewis from her perspective is doing very well trying to correct a ship that was a tad out of control. She stated she would like to see Lewis stay on with the County long enough to let the cement dry and hold what he is trying to correct. If Lewis is to exit prematurely, then you cannot be in a rush to make this decision because when she looks at the Board there are three (3) of you that will be gone for sure.

Commissioner Rexroat commented there is a possibility that it could be all seven (7). Clerk Crocker continued that without judging the merits of what you are doing overall are right or wrong, Interim Administrator Lewis needs to be here long enough to have the cement dry and allow him to bring back how county government is supposed to run. If he is pulled to soon, she sees the County going backwards and having even more bedlam and he has to be given the freedom to start hiring and firing. She stated we cannot continue to keep waiting and having "we can't do this until we get this person", "we can't do this until we do that" and so on and so on because this is not at all helping where we are trying to get this to go or where the Board motion is trying to get us to go. Unless this Board is going to step up and acknowledge that this was done on a whim for political purposes and nothing else, she thinks Lewis should stay in

place. Crocker stated she likes both of the final two candidates and has no issues with either one of them and she can work with either one, but do not force this decision. She said you need to keep Lewis in place longer to let the cement dry, or at least move forward and let him get you where you need to be because you everything solid and then let's bring the person in and it seems like you are trying to do this in reverse. When you do this in reverse than you are trying to bring someone new in and let a band new person, who may not even be familiar with county government, make decisions they are really not ready for. If you don't understand county government, this environment is not for everyone. She commented that when she first started here with the County, she thought to herself "Oh My Word" is this really how this works coming from private sector to the government sector. There are subtle differences here and it is not for everyone and that's okay.

Chairman Wessell thanked Crocker for her comments and asked County Treasurer John A. Gallagher III if he would like to speak. Gallagher replied (from the audience) he had nothing to say of any quality.

Chief Deputy County Clerk Jennifer Zywicki stated she was asked after Monday's meeting what her opinion was, which she stated at the time was that either which way you go today, with choosing a candidate or Interim Administrator Lewis stays on, is that the Finance Department currently is running on two cylinders of a four-cylinder motor. If you want a Finance Department where you want four people, one of her opinions when she resigned as Finance Director was that she did not have a second in command. Currently the department has an Interim Finance Director with two account clerks for staffing and one account clerk position sits vacant. Zywicki explained that if the Finance Director wishes to plan a trip to Costa Rica and get away from the office there is no one on staff unless the County Administrator steps up to process and make decisions in the Finance Director's absence to keep the County's finances running. The account clerks will do a wonderful job of the daily work, which they always have, but the decision making and the on-the-spot decisions that need to be made there is no one in that between. If not all, then many, County departments have a second in command, so she does believe in her opinion that even if you chose the path of Administrator/CFO the Boards main focus should be on having a Finance Director, Assistant Finance Director and an Account Clerk. If the Board wishes to have a second Account Clerk on staff that will serve you well.

Zywicki explained that in the past with her experience as Finance Director was when working together with the prior Administrator (Janik) that when she was pulled for meetings to attend then she was pulled from her work that needed to be handled. You are looking at the same situation when there is not an Assistant Finance Director because the Finance Director position then has their hands in the day-to-day and can't be a "Manager" and take on projects that need their attention. The Finance Director position should be focused on the Budget, Budget Amendments and Transfers, General Ledger, working with the County Treasurer, Brownfield Authority, Land Bank and everything else for you, but they won't have to have their hands on payroll other than to sign off that everything looks good because the Assistant would be overseeing the day-to-day work. The Assistant Finance Director will be the one handling everything else in between so there are no surprises for the Finance Director.

Zywicki commented that if the Board decides to push this decision off, she said that her advice to the Board would be to have Interim Administrator Lewis start to create your Finance Department. The first step is hiring a Finance Director and the second step is to hire an

assistant. If Interim Finance Director Cathy Hartesvelt is chosen as the Finance Director than once she selects an assistant, Hartesvelt can move towards training them and you have an Account Clerk that has all the basics, you are then working on that group to be able to keep going and to sustain. What has been lost here is the sustainability in her opinion and is instead constant change, along with everything being up in the air because the balls have been tossed nobody really knows who is going to catch them. Zywicki said what we are looking for is to create a department and on their own if an Administrator comes and goes, as her favorite former Administrator Janik has said he was the longest standing here with Leelanau County for over ten years. She stated Janik always talked about the fact that typically a County Administrator stays on only three to four years. Zywicki stated that she understands wanting to put your investment within an Administrator/CFO, because that was the County Clerk and the County Treasurer's roles together along with County Administrator. By pulling the roles away from the County Clerk and County Treasurer you will have to have someone who will oversee all of it because now the Finance Director and Administrator are it.

Zywicki explained if the Board decides to pause today on selecting a candidate, then come Tuesday morning when Interim Administrator Lewis comes to work then his role would be to get this Finance Department setup and get them going so that anyone can come in as Administrator and work with the people that have been hired and learned the processes. She said she agrees that you will have to do Financial Software upgrade, which has been talked about for years. When the finances were processed within the Clerk's Office there was not the staffing or the time to take on a project like a BS&A Financial Software conversion and installation. The time just wasn't there and two more people would have had to have been hired along with the fact that you will most likely have to even hire someone now just to be in charge of a major task like software implantation because it is such a cumbersome task to take on, a very large task. If you are looking at a finance department and Administrator/CFO that Finance Director is going to be setting up that software, going to be looking at chart of accounts so that is matches with State of Michigan, working with the County Treasurer and they will be working with each and every department for receipting purposes, general ledger access, accounts payable access and it will take a majority of their work and that is not something that even an Administrator/CFO will have time for. The Administrator/CFO can certainly direct the work, but she thinks if you can get the Finance Department setup and make it sustainable then whomever you will bring in you will have that in your favor instead of now where we feel like it is short changed.

Chairman Wessell and Commissioner Rexroat thanked Zywicki for her comments. Commissioner Lautner commented that there is our knowledge and our CFO right there.

Chairman Wessell stated that we have talked about the candidates and we have talked about the options and we are now at item #2 on the agenda for next steps, so what do we do?

Next Steps – Position of County Administrator/CFO:

Commissioner Rexroat said if he is listening to the comments from both Crocker and Zywicki he hears there is support to keep Interim Administrator Lewis on and getting the Finance Department put together, and he agrees with that whole heartedly. His hesitation about the candidates was to not have that happen, but he doesn't feel personally that either one is an exact fit of what we are looking for right now, so he would fully endorse that path forward right now. He asked if a decision needs to be made today?

Janik explained to the Board that you don't want to bring someone in on a split vote. He said he is sure Commissioner Lautner remembers when that happened last time with the search that was prior to him where the Board had difficulty and finally voted four to three (4-3), which was for the third or fourth choice. The individual hired started with strikes already against them and lasted only about a year. This is a two-way process because Administrator's want your support when they are coming in and be leery of any candidate that was willing to do that unless they were a strong candidate. Sometimes it can happen that when you get down to the final two, who are both strong, and the Board struggles to agree to receive full support, which that is a different situation. History has shown that someone hired on a split vote does not work out to well.

Commissioner O'Rourke commented that by looking back to try to get a way out of this, he does agree with Commissioner Rexroat but he really thinks we missed the boat on selecting candidate Tracy Byard. He said she is a several year experienced County Administrator both in Clare and Oceana Counties, and she is a CPA, who talked about working on budgets and doing the budgets, and with looking back he thinks that we missed it.

Commissioner Allgaier stated she agrees to the idea of letting Interim Administrator Lewis continue his work and is grateful that he has been willing to do it, and thanked Janik for bringing him in. She said she would like to restart this process in late August and be done by the end of our terms. In regards to Commissioner Rexroat's comments, she stated she appreciates Zywicki's comment because what we need to know is the experience of the people here, what will it take to do the job and she thinks we should move forward with getting the Finance Department fully staffed. The only caution she has is that one of the reasons we combined Administrator/CFO was because if we were going to get a competent CPA in the Finance Department, we were going to have to pay big bucks, and so we consolidated them so we could pay one high salary and not two. We need to think about that and it doesn't mean that we can't get someone really competent in the Finance Department, but do we need a CPA there if there is one within the Administrator. She continued that there is a lot to consider here and we didn't want to do that before, so we combined the position, but let's go forward and hire a complete staff for the Finance Department in the meantime.

Commissioner Ross re-iterated that we are assuming that Interim Administrator Lewis is interested in developing this Finance Department, and when she spoke with him yesterday Lewis wants to go from 21 weekly hours to 25 hours, and is that really an expectation that we can have him as the Administrator to help develop a Finance Department on 25 hours a week. She said she understands you guys have had conversations with him, but she just wants to make sure this plan goes forward.

Chairman Wessell stated if we went forward then he would ask you to allow him to meet with Lewis, develop and negotiate a contract for the balance of the time here, and have him come and talk about his expectations, along with our expectations, and how it is going to work.

Janik said that when you have that dialogue there has to be a plan with an exit day. He explained that Lewis says he has been very open from the beginning, at least from what Lewis has conversed with Janik about, Lewis is willing to stay on as long as there is a plan. Janik stated that Lewis doesn't want to come in here not knowing how long he is committing himself for.

Commissioner Allgaier commented so based on what Chairman Wessell has said then she would make the statements into a motion and would anyone support that.

Chairman Wessell stated before a motion is made, he would like to respond to it. He said that he and Janik had definite conversations yesterday about his (Lewis) intentions about moving forward with fairly concrete plans for finance. Wessell confirmed with Janik that Lewis did share that with them.

Janik stated he got the impression that he (Lewis) is willing to go forward on 25 hours a week and proceed with developing the Finance Department.

#161-06142024 Special Session

MOTION BY ALLGAIER THAT THE LEELANAU COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS AUTHORIZE THE BOARD CHAIRMAN TO NEGOTIATE A CONTRACT WITH RICHARD I. LEWIS TO EXTEND HIS CURRENT CONTRACT. SECONDED BY REXROAT.

Discussion – Janik explained there will need to be discussion on how you are going to proceed with the candidates because they will want to know what the status is, along with Mr. Lewis wanting to know. Commissioner O'Rourke stated that Lewis may want to be included on all of this. Commissioner Allgaier asked if we could just let candidate Belsky know we are not yet ready to make a decision and we are putting it on hold. Chairman Wessell said he assumes he knows since this meeting is live streamed and he hopes we can communicate to candidate Belsky and candidate Belcher that we are impressed, and we would like them to remain interested. Janik stated there is a motion on the floor, but you should to back and have discussion on what you are going to do with the position of Administrator/CFO. Clerk Crocker re-stated the motion. Commissioner Ross if the motion needs to be more specific? Janik replied, no, because then Chairman Wessell will come back with a proposal. Commissioner Lautner stated she too had the same question, so it will come back to the full Board to be voted on. Chairman Wessell stated he hopes to have the contract for the Regular Session on Tuesday, June 18, 2024.

ROLL CALL: Allgaier – YES; Kramer – ABSENT; Lautner – YES; O'Rourke – YES; Rexroat – YES; Ross – YES; Wessell – YES.

AYES – 6 ABSENT – 1 NO – 0

MOTION CARRIED.

Commissioner Allgaier asked can we tell candidate Belcher thank-you very much and tell candidate Belsky that we are going to recommence this process.

MOTION BY REXROAT THAT THE LEELANAU COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS INFORM MR. BELSKY THAT HE IS STILL AT THE TOP OF THE LIST BUT WE ARE GOING TO REINTERVIEW CANDIDATES IN 90 DAYS AND THAT MR. BELSKY IS STILL CONSIDERED A TOP CANDIDATE AND WILL BE REOPENING UP THE PROCESS AGAIN.

No support on the motion.

Janik said for clarification in 90 days what is the option going to be because he has heard discussion about an Administrator/CFO or Administrator. If the Board is going to repost a job, then the Board needs to decide which position is going to be posted.

Commissioner Ross stated it would be the same job.

Commissioner Rexroat commented he doesn't know if we are ready.

Commissioner Allgaier asked if we have to decide that right now and Janik replied, no. Janik explained if you say 90 days that it starts the clock ticking because you need to readvertise and everything else.

Commissioner Rexroat stated we have to come to an agreement on that within 45 days or he can make the motion up to 120 days. He said within the motion the days were just an attempt for follow up.

Commissioner Allgaier said by the end of August so we can get it done by December.

Commissioner Lautner commented that isn't 90 days.

Clerk Crocker clarified you don't have to make this decision today. Janik interrupted and stated yea, you don't have to decide today.

Commissioner Rexroat agreed and Janik stated that out of fairness to those two candidates they should know where they stand, and he has the impression that at this point there is not support to continue with dialogue with candidate Belcher, correct?

Commissioner Allgaier said regrettably no, Belcher would be great, but right now he doesn't fit. Janik reiterated right, at this point. Janik continued there is potential interest with candidate Belsky but you need to finalize a contract with Interim Administrator Richard I. Lewis and then as a Board you will have a discussion on where you are and how you are to proceed. Janik stated the Clerk is correct that you don't have to decide that now.

Commissioner Rexroat thanked Clerk Crocker and Rexroat withdrew the motion and said he wasn't even sure he finished it.

Chairman Wessell stated because of the way we just voted he will meet with Interim Administrator Lewis and ask him to speak to his interest, expectations and have a revised contract for the Regular Session on June 18, 2024, which will be added onto the agenda as a late addition.

Janik stated for example in "X" number of days, like 60 to 90 days, if he posts the job as just an Administrator, then the current candidates can reapply, and if it is Administrator/CFO than it will need more discussion. He commented the first step is to finalize the deal with Interim Administrator Lewis and then have a dialogue with Lewis on how much time he will need to finalize the Finance Department, with discussion in the near future on how to proceed. Janik explained you don't want to burden the Board with doing this as the first duty in January or February because that is not fair or fair to the candidates. Janik said you do need to think long term because the odds are if you look at the history for Leelanau County the first Administrator was in the 80's, which there is a sign posted in the Administrator's Office of all of them, that just like most counties they are short term positions. He said he was here almost 11 years, which is rare, plus that when he left from Clare up to the Upper Peninsula, he was either number two or three on the list of how long an administrator was employed, so there is constant turn over in these jobs. Janik continued that Grand Traverse, Wexford and Benzie

counties when through four County Administrator's within his time here, so it is a constant turn over job just like school superintendents. He said you really want to put a structure in place that will work for Leelanau County and find people to fit the structure.

Chairman Wessell wants to make sure that everyone has had a chance to speak to the issue and asked if any Commissioners have any further comments?

Commissioners Lautner, O'Rourke, Allgaier and Rexroat indicated they did not.

Commissioner Ross stated she takes this very seriously and she appreciates this group taking a little pause because that is exactly how she felt and has a good feeling about today's meeting.

Public Comment:

None.

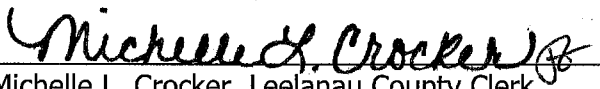
Commissioner Comments:

- Commissioner Allgaier thanked Janik for facilitating this.

Adjourn:

Meeting adjourned at 11:14 a.m.

Ty Wessell, Chairman
Leelanau County Board of Commissioners


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