



Emmet County News Release

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Emmet County Commissioners Hire Michael Reaves as County Administrator

"That is a very happy vote ... unanimous! Congratulations, Administrator Reaves!" announced Bill Shorter, chairman of the Emmet County Board of Commissioners, after the board voted on its only agenda item during a special meeting Monday, March 30.

The commissioners had called the special meeting for the specific purpose of approving a new contract which resulted in the word "acting" being removed from the current job title of Michael Reaves, making him the new county administrator. Reaves came to Emmet County in October 2018 to take the position of Facilities and Assets Director as well as Assistant County Administrator. The Board of Commissioners asked Reaves to serve as Acting County Administrator at the end of January 2020, following the retirement of former county administrator John Calabrese. At that time, Reaves had agreed only to stay on through May 31, or until the board hired a new administrator.



When the board moved to a vote on the county administrator contract Monday night, each board member weighed in with enthusiastic "yes" votes. The vote was a positive turn for the county during a time of crisis and uncertainty. The contract with Reaves, which runs from April 1, 2020, through March 31, 2023, provides the board with stability in county leadership and removes the burden of trying to fill that top spot in the county during such a disruptive time across the world.

Though the board had taken steps to begin a search for a new administrator, over the past two months multiple board members had encouraged Reaves to reconsider his short-term contract. At last month's regular board meeting on March 19, as the county had just launched several changes to comply with the governor's orders to prevent the spread of the novel coronavirus, Emmet County Sheriff Pete Wallin addressed the board and implored them to find a way to keep Reaves on as administrator.

"We've got a leader right now," Sheriff Wallin said during the meeting's public comment portion and pointed over to Reaves. "We've had some emergency meetings and he's done things as a whole. He's not shooting from the hip and making these decisions. He's taken my voice, he's taken Randy's [EMS Director Weston], and he's taken the voices of other department heads' and he is making sure that he is keeping our employees safe. Our employees are scared right now and he's making sure we are doing the best things. We are going to need a leader to get us through this because it's not going to be over next week."

Sheriff Wallin went on to say, "We can't let this man go anywhere. He's the glue holding this all together right now. Believe me, we couldn't do it without him. And, if you talk to any county employee or any department head, they're glad

he's here right now. He's got a background in this; he knows what to do ... I beg and plead for you to do whatever you can to keep him here, and keep him here past June 1st."

On Tuesday morning, Commissioner Toni Drier, the board's co-chairperson, said she believed the board "absolutely made the right decision" to hire Reaves.

"Mike has proven from day one as interim administrator that he is capable in this position," Drier continued. "He's proven himself in his handling of the erosion issues, the PFAS issue in Pellston and numerous other issues involving county facilities. His leadership in working with Dr. Lo and McLaren Hospital, the health department, sheriff's office, fire departments, OEM [Office of Emergency Management] and all of the cities, townships, and villages regarding the county's response to COVID-19 will prove invaluable for the citizens of Emmet County. And, I want to again thank Mike's family for recognizing that Emmet County needed his continued leadership."

Prior to joining the staff at Emmet County in late 2018, Reaves had served for more than six years as Police Chief and Director of Public Safety for the City of Port Huron. He came to his position in Port Huron after moving up through the ranks in the Utica Police Department over a 32-year career, including serving as Utica's Chief of Police from 2003-2011. In addition to his experience, Reaves has a Bachelor of Science degree in criminal justice from Madonna University in Livonia. He has also had extensive training in administrative and executive development throughout his career, including completion of an F.B.I. National Academy training program to expand his administrative skills.

When the board voted to approve Reaves' contract, Sheriff Wallin commented from his virtual location during Monday's meeting that the board "did the right thing."

"Well, if I could just add to that," said Commissioner Shorter, "I think that Mike Reaves has been doing exactly the right thing ever since he came in as Acting County Administrator. So, he really did the right thing and we just followed along and we're giving him credit for that. Mike wasn't given the job. He definitely earned it. I think this is going to be a good bond for many future years. Hopefully, maybe ten, before he decides to retire."

Reaves thanked everyone for the compliments, but credited the team he works with.

"We've got the same team that's been here and I'm real pleased with that. I think we have a solid team. We have a lot of challenges, but that's okay because challenges are what really makes us in the long run," Reaves told the board. "I plan on keeping you well-informed in terms of what we're facing and where we're headed. As you all know, I'm open to input constantly. It takes many sets of eyes in many different positions to fully understand the way to go, so if I can be of help to anybody, please let me know."

Besides approving the three-year contract for a new administrator, Monday's meeting was special in another way as it was the first time the Board of Commissioners had held a meeting over the video conferencing platform Zoom. With state-mandated restrictions in place to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus, each board member joined the online meeting from their own homes. When it became obvious last week that meetings were not going to be held in-person together at the county building, the county's department of Information Technology (IT) hustled to find a solution.

That effort was commended by the board Monday night. "I would really like to thank Tatem," said Shorter about IT Director Tatem Phelps. "He took the Zoom ball and really ran with it, and put us in touch with the chamber of commerce as well. He's just been great."

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For questions or more information, contact Michael Reaves, County Administrator (231-348-1701); Bill Shorter, Board of Commissioners chairperson; Toni Drier, co-chairperson

(NOTE – Michael Reaves headshot photo attached for your convenience.)