



Emmet County News Release

For immediate release – Dec. 16, 2020

Commissioners Give Reaves High Marks In First Performance Review

During the Committee of the Whole meeting Dec. 14, Emmet County Board of Commissioners moved into a closed session to provide Emmet County Administrator Michael Reaves with his annual progress evaluation.

When Reaves was hired as the county's administrator on March 30 of this year, he had been serving as acting administrator for just over two months and planned to end his employment with Emmet County in June 2020. Michigan's rising coronavirus cases had resulted in a statewide shutdown and the Emmet County's courthouse and other county buildings had been closed only days earlier. The situation was evolving by the hour at that point so commissioners were motivated to maintain steady leadership and worked to secure a contract with Reaves.

In that March 30 meeting, commissioners praised Reaves' handling of the crisis situation and unanimously approved a three-year contract with him to run through March 31, 2023.

In the closed session evaluation, Reaves received an unchallenged overall grade of A+ along with a slew of compliments from the board. He was commended for his performance, accomplishments, and ability to bring others together to work on problems and develop plans. Board members also shared comments received from others on county boards and committees, expressing appreciation for the positive direction of the county under Reaves' administration.

"Mike's communication skills, his management capabilities to put out fires, and his leadership style have worked productively to build relationships between the Board of Commissioners and the administration, and between the administration and the county staff," said Chairperson Bill Shorter.

The board's co-chair Toni Drier agreed with her colleagues, adding that she has received "numerous calls from constituents, and others serving on boards and committees who have dealt directly with Mr. Reaves, who are grateful for his communication skills and thankful that he was chosen as administrator."

Reaves thanked the commissioners for their kind words and support, but reiterated that the county staff "deserved appreciation for results produced as well."

In addition to the annual evaluation, another aspect of the administrator's contract included working with the board to establish realistic and obtainable goals for the upcoming year.

Five provisional goals were discussed for the upcoming performance period, including:

1. Revise, update, and implement Emmet County policies.
2. Produce a realistic capital investment plan that addresses funding approaches, opportunities, and remedies as well as provide a realistic approach to long-term planning.

3. Increase information technology capabilities with a focus on enhancing storage capacity, networks and data security; completing fiber connectivity; upgrading the antiquated telephone system; and addressing hardware and software shortfalls where necessary.
4. Enhance and build upon previous efforts focused on staff recruitment, retention, and development which may include enhanced benefits, staff training, creative retirement, or deferred contribution alternatives.
5. Take steps to move towards developing and implementing a three-year budget.

“The goals are an excellent place to start,” Commissioner Shorter said, but with three newly-elected commissioners set to start in January, he noted the strategic planning session tentatively set for February “is the correct place for further discussion and approval.”

Reaves agreed that though the provisional goals discussion had been beneficial, he told the board “it would be good to use the strategic planning meeting with the new board members to vet, solidify, and get their perspective on these goals and others they may want to bring forward.”

The board and Reaves will continue to consider goal options until that strategic planning session when Reaves will look for commissioners to set specific, measurable, and attainable goals that will provide guidance for his efforts as county administrator in the year ahead.

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