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KENT COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS RECESS AND RELOCATE MEETING

Move in accordance with Michigan Case Law

Grand Rapids, Mich. (September 13, 2018) – Earlier today, the Kent County Board of Commissioners meeting was recessed and relocated due to disruptive actions taken by members of Movimiento Cosecha GR and Rapid Response to ICE at the Kent County Commission Chambers.

Similar disruptions by these groups forced the Board of Commissioners to recess public meetings on June 28, 2018 and July 26, 2018.

“Based on the disruptions at today’s meeting, and given similar disruptions at our prior two meetings, we followed legal precedent that allows a public body to relocate a meeting to complete the business before us,” said Jim Saalfeld, Chair of the Board of Commissioners.

Saalfeld was referring to case law referenced is the Regents of the University of Michigan v. WCCAA (97 Mich. App. 532). In it, the Court ruled a public body may move its meeting and exclude disruptive protesters from attending. The Court held the effect was the same as removing the protesters without the need to arrest them.

“While we did not make this decision lightly, we believe it was our best option to conduct the County’s business in a thoughtful manner,” said Saalfeld. “Media was invited to cover the meeting at our new location, and it will be available for viewing on our YouTube channel in the coming days. Accordingly, I believe we were upholding our commitment to being transparent with the public.”

The Board of Commissioners meeting, which began in the Kent County Commission Chambers at 8:30 a.m. this morning, was recessed at approximately 9:12 a.m. A new meeting notice was posted at 9:16 a.m. and the meeting resumed at 9:30 a.m.

Prior to the meeting and before staff recommended this rarely-used procedure, it carefully considered its options.

“We did not want to take this action, but these groups gave us no choice,” said Kent County Administrator Wayman Britt. “They’ve disrupted three consecutive public meetings, and they walked out of an informational meeting with sheriff’s officials and county staff when we attempted to discuss ways to work together. It was our responsibility to identify an alternative way to conduct the county’s business while maintaining transparency.”

A copy of the Regents of the University of Michigan case can be found at accesskent.com along with a fact sheet about the ICE contract with the Sheriff’s Department.

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