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Kent County Board of Commissioners Selects New County Administrator
Al Vanderberg to succeed Britt after 17-year tenure in County administration

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (June 24, 2021) – After hosting a community forum and conducting third round interviews at today’s Kent County Board of Commissioners meeting, board chair Mandy Bolter announced that the board of commissioners has selected Al Vanderberg as its choice for Kent County Administrator/Controller. Bolter will enter immediate contract negotiations with Vanderberg with the aim of presenting a final contract for board approval at the commission meeting on July 22.

“This has been an exciting, thorough and transparent process that culminated with the selection of a strong, visionary and highly competent individual,” said Bolter. “Thanks to our dedicated search subcommittee, our board of commissioners and the high level of community engagement in the process, I’m confident that Al will be the kind of leader who reflects the community’s priorities and can leverage Kent County’s assets for sustained growth and innovative service to our residents.”

Pending contract approval, Vanderberg, who currently serves as Ottawa County Administrator, is expected to step into the top Kent County staff position later this summer. He has been the administrator in Ottawa County since 2003 managing 1,200 employees who serve a population of about 300,000 residents.

Current County Administrator/Controller, Wayman P. Britt, notified the board of his intention to retire last October. He has been with the County administration for more than 17 years and has served in the top spot since January 2018.

Shortly after Britt’s announcement, Bolter appointed a seven-member executive search subcommittee charged with deploying an equitable process to recruit and recommend finalists to the board of commissioners to interview for the appointment of the County Administrator/Controller. The subcommittee’s work included identifying an executive search firm that could execute a comprehensive national search to identify and recruit a diverse slate of highly qualified candidates.

Global executive search firm, Korn Ferry, was contracted and kicked off the search process in January 2021 with subcommittee and community stakeholder meetings and surveys aimed at defining key qualifications for the position.

“Community engagement was a vital component of this search,” said Dante Villarreal, vice president of business & talent development at the Grand Rapids Chamber and member of the search subcommittee. “Hundreds of community leaders from nonprofits, business, economic development, philanthropy, education, advocacy, local government and healthcare were interviewed or surveyed. We considered a broad range of voices throughout the process.”

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Through a multi-faceted market outreach campaign targeting highly diverse recruitment sites across the country, the firm identified over 140 prospects and contacted more than 100 potential candidates and sources. From this group, the firm identified 13 external and one internal candidate to present for search subcommittee consideration on May 14. The subcommittee selected five candidates for first round interviews at public meetings on June 9 and 10; three were advanced as finalists. In all, the subcommittee met 10 times over the course of eight months; all meetings were noticed and open to the public.

Vanderberg is responsible for oversight of administrative and other departments within Ottawa County and serves on boards, committees and workgroups for numerous Ottawa County and community agencies and organizations. Those include chair of the County Brownfield Redevelopment Board, president of the County Economic Development Corporation Board, and membership on the Grand Valley Metro Council Board, Lakeshore Advantage Board and Housing Next Board.

He began his career in Lenawee County in 1986, and subsequently served in city management in Greenville and South Haven. Immediately prior to joining Ottawa County, he was the Deputy County Administrator/Controller in Kent County from 1999-2003.

He was appointed in 2018 by the Michigan Civil Rights Department to serve on the Michigan Council for Local Government and Education on Equity and Inclusion. In 2017, he was appointed to the Michigan Child Lead Exposure Elimination Commission by Governor Snyder and reappointed by Governor Whitmer in 2019. He is a member of the Government Finance Officers Association and the National Association of County Administrators. He was president of the board of the Michigan Association of County Administrative Officials in 2011 and of the Michigan Local Government Management Association in 2010 and retains membership in both organizations.

“As we emerge from one of the most challenging periods in modern history, the County remains focused on advancing policies to support economic prosperity, safe and healthy communities and inclusive engagement,” said Bolter. “We look forward to working with AI to help further these priorities and to identify new partnerships and areas for growth.”

Britt’s retirement is effective on July 24. During his tenure in County administration, he oversaw the opening of the Kent County Human Services Complex, creation of the West Michigan Sports Commission and establishment of the Kent School Services Network. More recently, he directed modernization of the County’s IT infrastructure, helped launch the Kent County Population Health Consortium, drove planning for the new Kent County Parks Office and initiated implementation of the 2019 Kent County Strategic Plan.

“After 17 years serving Kent County, it will be hard to walk away from this job,” Britt said. “However, I am not walking away from this tremendous community. I will carry with me the indelible mark so many people have made on me – from our County team to those leading and making a difference in our community. I’ll carry this with me well beyond my tenure here. I trust that the County will be in excellent hands with AI. I have great respect for him, and I wish him the very best.”

Britt plans to stay in West Michigan and will remain engaged in community service activities.

“I had the pleasure of working with Wayman on a number of pivotal projects,” said Kent County Commissioner and past board chair, Roger Morgan. “He was a key driver behind the sports commission and the human services complex. We had been trying to get the DHS project done for years, and Wayman took it over the finish line. He’s dedicated to this community, and I feel fortunate to have had the opportunity to partner with him in service to the people of Kent County.”

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