



# HCBR Newsletter

## Special Election Issue

August 2024

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# 2025 Board Election Approaches

The Hillsdale County Board of REALTORS® election week will run from September 9-13 during regular Board business hours.

Ballots may be cast by all eligible voting members during office hours. Those who will be out of the area during election week may contact the Board Office for an ab-

**sentee ballot. That ballot may be cast the week prior to the general election.**

The week-long election process makes it possible for more members to be able to vote.

**The sample ballot on page 6 of this newsletter includes the nominees for 2025 officer positions.**

Officers who will remain on the Board and are not up for re-election are: Matt Yoder who moves up to President, Diana Carson who becomes Past President, and Brad Jenkins and Scott Phillips, Directors, who each have one year remaining in their current term.

Tjaj Fitton and Alicia

Galloway are serving their final year of this election cycle.

Candidates for 2025 elected office are: Vice President, Tjaj Fitton and Christie Plemmons; Treasurer, Sherri Groves and Megan VonDeylen; and for the ONE open Director seat, Alicia Galloway, Kara Moyer and Mary Playford.

## Tjaj Fitton, Christie Plemmons, Seek Board Vice Presidency



Tjaj Fitton

**BROKERAGE:**

Playford Real Estate

**YEARS A MEMBER:** 11

**BOARD OFFICES HELD:**

Director

Vice President

President

**COMMITTEE SERVICE:**

Nomination

**CANDIDATE Information:**

Tjaj Fitton is running for Board Vice President this year after having served as

last year's past president. If elected, she will move up to Board President for 2025 and Past President for 2026. She was selected as the Board's Rookie of the Year in 2015 and REALTOR of the Year in 2023.

"If elected, I will continue to work hard on the Board of Directors and promote its goals," says Tjaj.

"I believe strongly in the Mission Statement of the board with its emphasis on professionalism, education and fairness. I will always work to make the Board environment fair, friendly, and fun for all members."

When not participating in Board activities, Tjaj enjoys spending time with family, traveling, boating, and attending Detroit Lions games. She has been in-

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Christie Plemmons

**BROKERAGE:**

Christie Plemmons Realty

**YEARS A MEMBER:** 21

**BOARD OFFICES HELD:**

President

Vice President

Past President

**COMMITTEE SERVICE:**

Economic Development

Education

Executive

Grievance

Public Relations

Purchase Agreement

**CANDIDATE Notes:**

Christie has been a Board Member for 21 years and has received both the REALTOR® of the Year and the Lifetime Achievement Awards from Hillsdale County. She has earned a broker's license and now heads her own brokerage.

Christie has been active in the Board multiple times over the years, sitting on the Board of Directors as well as serving on numerous committees.

She is active in her church and the community and feels it is important to be invested in the local Board and to serve the members with her wealth of experience. "It is important to promote Board benefits to our members, and to work out new ways to help

*(Continued on page 2)*



# Groves, VonDeylen, Seek Board 2025 Treasurer’s Spot



Sherri Groves

**BROKERAGE:**

Coldwell Banker Groves Real Estate

**YEARS A MEMBER: 13**

**BOARD OFFICES HELD**

Treasurer

**COMMITTEE SERVICE:**

Finance

**CANDIDATE Information:**

Sherri says she is happy to continue her tenure as Board Treasurer once again.

“I have enjoyed serving as Treasurer this year and using

my knowledge to keep our Board strong financially. It’s important that we are able to withstand economic changes as they come along.”

Sherri adds, “I have a long history with finances. I graduated with a Bachelor’s degree in Accounting and went on to obtain my CPA license. I interned at a manufacturing company during college, spent 7 years as a public accountant, and served as a Commercial Loan Officer at a local financial institution. I have also been maintaining the financial records for our office for 10 years, so I have a very solid history with accounting and finances and will do my best to put that knowledge to good use in the best interests of the Board.”

Sherri served as treasurer from 2015 to 2016, from 2019 to 2021 and in 2024.



Megan VonDeylen

**BROKERAGE:**

Stone Realty Group

**YEARS A MEMBER: 5**

**Committee Service:**

- Education
- Political Affairs
- Professional Standards

**CANDIDATE Notes:**

With a family in rodeo Megan says she has always been focused on honesty, trustworthiness and integrity. Her career in real estate has brought an unwavering focus on continuous growth and development. Realizing the potential for

greatness in every individual, “I have made it my mission to foster a culture of agent development within my brokerage, and the industry as a whole. I am a passionate mentor for my team, equipping them with the knowledge and skills needed to excel in the ever-evolving real estate landscape. I am completely invested in my agents’ success and dedicated to helping them reach their full potential,” she says.

Beyond her brokerage, Megan is an advocate for professional self-improvement in the real estate community. She frequently attends and speaks at workshops and seminars throughout the U.S., learning from and sharing her expertise and insights with her peers.

“I firmly believe that by elevating the entire industry, we can collectively create an environment of trust and

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## Mary Playford

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the crowd and challenge the status quo in my profession with new ideas and innovation,” she says.

Mary remembers the difficult years and uses them to keep her grounded and motivated.

“One of the most satisfying things in my life is the ability to assist families in making one of the biggest decisions of their lives,” says Mary. “I have found satisfaction and purpose in my time as a REALTOR® and I feel, as a member of the Board of Directors, that I can help fellow REALTORS® to achieve that as well.”

## \$500 MR and NAR Convention Scholarships Available for Board Member Attendance

The Board is continuing to offer \$500 scholarships to aid members in attending the Michigan REALTORS® or National Association of REALTORS® Conventions. Priority will be given to new members, or those who haven’t received scholarships in the past. Six scholarships are available.

Conventions offer numerous educational programs as well as helping to keep members abreast of the latest news in the real estate industry.

The \$500 can go to any convention expenses including registration, hotel or transportation.

In order to take advantage of this offer, the member needs to sign up through the Board Office, and if selected (first come first served) must attend the convention and provide proof of attendance such as a receipt for hotel room. The attendee will also need to make a short report either at the annual meeting or a piece published in the Board

Newsletter.

“We hope to see members take advantage of these offers,” says Board President, Diana Carson. “The conventions offer members lots of opportunities to up their game and become more proficient in their profession. It also offers networking opportunities and a way to help themselves through the experiences of others.”

Contact the Board Office at 517-439-1770 or [hcboard@yahoo.com](mailto:hcboard@yahoo.com) to get your name on the list!

# Three Vie for One Director Seat

## NAR Changes Now in Place for Flex MLS



Alicia Galloway



Kara Moyer



Mary Playford

**BROKERAGE:**

RE/MAX Preferred Realty

**YEARS A MEMBER: 25**

**BOARD OFFICES HELD:**

Director

**COMMITTEE SERVICE:**

- Awards
- Grievance
- MLS
- Public Relations
- Purchase Agreement
- Political Affairs
- Professional Standards

**CANDIDATE Notes:**

Alicia has worked for several years as chair of the Awards Committee, during which time she has worked to perfect the awards process to make it fair and comprehensive. "This is an ongoing project as any system can be improved upon," she says. She has also worked on a number of other committees over the years.

"Being on the Board of Directors allows me to continue to interact with other members, sharing ideas and communicating about issues that our members may be facing, especially in today's market.

"If elected to another term I would like to help fellow REALTORS® and let the community know why REALTORS® are essential in their transactions."

**BROKERAGE:**

CENTURY 21 Drews Realty

**YEARS A MEMBER: 5**

**COMMITTEE SERVICE:**

- Political Affairs
- Christmas Party

**CANDIDATE Information:**

Kara has been busy with the Board of REALTORS Political Affairs Committee since she first became a member. She has helped plan and work at the Celebrate Summer Events and created the Fair Housing Booth to use with those activities.

For several years Kara owned and managed a bar catering business. She has spent time volunteering with yearly fundraisers for Domestic Violence Awareness and has worked with homeless teens at the Branch County Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence.

She enjoys helping at her childrens' schools and at their extracurricular activities as well. Kara has faced some challenges over the years and tackles them with a positive attitude and spirit. She is supportive of all Board Events and is currently working on the Board Christmas Party plans for 2024.

**BROKERAGE:**

Playford Real Estate

**YEARS A MEMBER: 22**

**BOARD OFFICES HELD:**

Director

**COMMITTEE SERVICE:**

- Core Standards
- Executive
- Grievance
- Lockbox
- Purchase Agreement
- Professional Standards
- Public Relations

**CANDIDATE Notes:**

Mary has been a member of numerous board committees over the years and has served on the Board of Directors as well. She has been a winner of the REALTOR® of the Year Award and has participated in the Michigan REALTORS® Convention.

Mary has taken on leadership positions through the Board and has given back to the community in many ways, including through the MDOT Highway Cleanup and Salvation Army Bell Ringing. She provides baskets for the annual basket raffle fundraiser sponsored as part of the Board Christmas Party.

"My agents motivate and challenge me everyday. I want to stand out from

*(Continued on page 3)*

The NAR Settlement changes have been made in Flex MLS for all MichRIC members. Commission fields have been removed for listing input and in reports for all property types **except** Commercial Sale and Commercial Lease. Flex has run into some issues with the custom programming that was implemented for these fields on listing input. The issues with the Commercial Sale and Commercial Lease property types should be resolved shortly and the fields for these property types should be removed by the end of the day (August 14).

In addition, Flex must run a refresh on all listings inside of their API. This process has started but will take a few days to fully complete. Because the Flex mobile app runs directly on their API, the mobile app will update as the API refreshes. Members will see these fields removed starting with on-market listings and moving its way to prior history data (newest to oldest).

The new Michigan REALTOR® Forms have been updated in ZipForms and Dotloop for member access. Members can access these forms in both programs via the Michigan REALTORS® library.

New listing input forms are also available for those who use them. Dotloop and Zipforms have agreed to update these as well.

The Board Office also has copies of listing input forms that can be emailed to anyone who needs them.

# Celebrate Summer Family Fun Day & RPAC Fundraiser Gathers Fine Crowd Including Kids

The Board’s annual Celebrate Summer RPAC Fundraiser and Family Fun Day was another great success this year. Though numbers were down somewhat, the effort still raised \$1,955.00 for RPAC this year. That amount put the Board over goal for 2024.

“We would like members to remember that the event not only benefits RPAC, but provides a family fun event at a discount for member families. Thanks to the sponsors, we are able to charge a discounted fee for the food and games for participants. Getting an all-you-can-eat Pizza Bar as well as unlimited rides and games for only \$25 is a real deal,” says Board President and Political Affairs Committee Chair, Diana Carson.

This year’s event was held again at the Silos’s Fun Park and Cottage Inn Pizza and included an open pizza and

*Sponsors for the Celebrate Summer Event helped put the Board over the top for RPAC Fundraising and provided a great venue for families to have some summer fun. Sponsors were:*

- Southern Michigan Bank & Trust***
- Brandy Titus***
- Public Title Agency***
- County National Bank***
- Devon Title***
- Greenstone Farm Credit Services***
- Midstate Title Agency***
- O’l Carriage Barn***
- Smokin’ Steve’s BBQ***
- Barrett Insurance***
- Elevate Title Agency***
- Inspection One***
- Mutual Title Agency***
- Union Home Mortgage***
- Ethan’s Donut Factory***

salad bar, Dippin’ Dots ice cream treats, a Mini Golf Tournament, a Corn Hole Tournament and rides and games provided by Silos.

The Cornhole Championship was played a little differently this year with randomly selected teams drawn from a jar. The winning team members were Garrett Hall (representing M3 Mortgage) and James Smith (representing the Hillsdale-Board of REALTORS® Office).

The Mini Golf Tournament winners were from CENTURY 21 Affiliated for the third time, with team members: Julie Games, Brad Jenkins, Brendan Akers and Marissa Campbell. Each player won a \$10 gift certificate from Ethan’s Donuts.

The Board also had a Fair Housing Display Board for members to test their knowledge.

There’s always room for

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# Board Exceeds 2024 RPAC Goal of \$4164.00; Celebrate Summer Brings in the Final Funds

The Hillsdale County Board of REALTORS® has achieved and exceeded its 2024 RPAC Goal of \$4,164.00. Thanks to the donors listed here and the excellent participation in the RPAC Celebrate Summer Fundraiser

Event. Though participant numbers attending the Celebrate Summer Event were down slightly from last year, the fundraiser still generated \$1,955.00 for RPAC.

Whether members invest a little or a lot, all proceeds

contribute to the REALTOR® Party.

The REALTOR® Party is a powerful alliance of REALTORS® and REALTOR® Associations working to advance public policies and candidates that build strong com-

munities, protect property interests and promote a vibrant business environment.

The Board thanks the members listed below for their participation in these efforts.

## **Platinum Donors (\$100+)**

- Carolyn Scholfield*
- Shirley Smith*

## **Gold Donors (\$75-\$99)**

- Kara Moyer*

## **Silver Donors (\$50-\$74)**

- Ron Aemisegger*
- Ray Baxter*
- Aaron Buehler*
- Dawn Buehrer*
- Jewell Burkwalt*
- Bill Butler*
- James Campbell*
- Diana Carson*
- Brian Coe*
- Tom Dunn*
- Karen Foust*
- Alicia Galloway*
- Cathy Galloway*
- Julie Games*
- Kaitlyn Girdham*
- Barb Groves*
- Sherri Groves*
- Tim Groves*

- Claire Halliwill*
- Fred Halliwill*
- James Hartman*
- Michael Heisler*

## **Amy Howe**

- Dennis Irelan*
- Blake Jenkins*
- Brad Jenkins*
- Holly Jenkins*

## **Risa Mains**

- Adam McLafferty*
- Marlanea McGraw*
- Stephen Moore*
- Trevor Morin*
- Gretchen Oberdick*
- Scott Phillips*
- Bryan Playford*
- Mary Playford*
- Christie Plemmons*
- Mike Plemmons*
- Brandon Podolak*
- Kirk Putnam*
- Lori Rubley*
- Dan Satow*
- Annette Scoville*

- Jerry Slade*
- Rene' Spahr*
- Neil Stafford*

- Hannah Stiekes*
- Joe Wollet*
- Michelle Wollet*
- Matt Yoder*

## **Bronze Donors (\$15-\$49)**

- Michaela Blonde*
- Bev Bradstreet*
- Casey Butler*
- Amy Dryer*
- Tjay Fitton*
- Lisa Hayes*
- Hannah Jeffrey*
- Benjamin Jermeay*
- Lerya Keller*
- Tamra Kies*
- Samantha Moore*
- Tami Morris*
- Donna Plemmons*
- Kassy Plemmons*
- Pat Rising*
- Keegan Smith*
- Megan VonDeylen*
- Mattie Washington*
- Frank Willis*

**Hillsdale County Board of REALTORS**  
**2025 ELECTION SAMPLE BALLOT**  
September 9-13, 2024

**\*\*Note: The following officers will continue with the Board of Directors and are NOT up for re-election:**

President-Matt Yoder (CENTURY 21 Affiliated) (Moves up from Vice President)

Past President-Diana Carson (Key Realty) (Moves down from President)

Directors-Brad Jenkins (CENTURY 21 Affiliated) and Scott Phillips (Coldwell Banker Groves Real Estate), who each have one year remaining in their current term)

**Officer Nominees for Year 2025:**

Sample Ballot Only

Vice President

**(Please Mark Only One)**

- Tjay Fitton (Playford Real Estate)
- Christie Plemmons (Christie Plemmons Realty)

Treasurer

**(Please Mark Only One)**

- Sherri Groves (Coldwell Banker Groves Real Estate)
- Megan VonDeylen (Stone Realty Group)

Director (2 Years) (We will elect TWO directors this year)

**(Please Mark ONLY ONE)**

- Alicia Galloway (RE/MAX Preferred Realty)
- Kara Moyer (CENTURY 21 Drews Realty)
- Mary Playford (Playford Real Estate)

# NAR Settlement Changes Take Effect this Week: REALTOR® Members Must Comply...

## *Information provided by Becky Berke, MR Director of Legal Education*

On March 15, 2024, NAR reached a preliminary settlement agreement in a series of lawsuits involving real estate commissions. On April 23, 2024, the Court granted preliminary approval of the settlement. The process of court review will still take several months. Practice changes will be implemented on August 17, 2024; final approval is expected in November/December 2024.

There are strong grounds for the court to grant final approval of the settlement because it serves the best interests of all parties and class members and addresses the primary concerns raised by the DOJ.

## SETTLEMENT TERMS

(Please note items in red that are specific to REALTORS® ways of doing business)

1. **Provide a RELEASE OF LIABILITY for types of claims brought on behalf of home sellers related to broker commissions.**
  - The release of liability includes: NAR, NAR members, State and Local Realtor® Associations, Realtor®-owned MLS's, Brokerages with a Realtor®-member as principal and a residential transaction volume below \$2 billion in 2022.
  - The release does NOT include: Non-Realtor® owned MLS's, Brokerages with a residential transaction volume above \$2 billion in 2022, HomeServices of America (only remaining defendant at the time of settlement).
  - NOTE: The settlement provided an "opt-in" mechanism for the excluded entities to be included in the release, if they chose.
2. **Offers of compensation will no longer be permitted through the MLS.**
  - Rule to go in effect August 17, 2024.
  - The compensation field must be removed from the MLS.
  - Sellers and listing brokers are still permitted to offer compensation to buyer's brokers (off-MLS).
  - A listing broker can agree to share its commission with a buyer's broker, but only with the seller's approval.
  - A buyer and seller may agree (via a purchase agreement) that the seller will cover some of the buyer's closing costs, including buyer's broker fees.
  - Sellers may offer concessions (NOT compensation) on the MLS so long as they are not conditioned on using/paying a buyer's broker.
  - Brokers may display offers of compensation on their public-facing websites for their own listings – but not for other brokers' listings
3. **NAR will pay damages of \$418 million over 4 years.**
  - Membership dues will not increase in 2024 or 2025.
  - NAR continues to deny any wrongdoing.
  - NAR has long-maintained (and continues to believe) that cooperative compensation and NAR's current policies are good things that benefit buyers and sellers.
  - The settlement agreement makes it clear that NAR continues to deny any bad action or wrongdoing.
4. **MLS participants working with buyers must enter into a written agreement with those buyers prior to viewing a home.**
  - The written agreement must state the amount of compensation to be paid to the buyer's broker.
  - The amount cannot be "open-ended" and must be "objectively ascertainable."
  - The amount received (from any source) cannot exceed the amount agreed-upon in the buyer's agency agreement.
  - Must disclose that "broker commissions are not set by law and are fully negotiable."
5. **What should REALTORS® be doing now?**
  - Articulate your value as REALTORS® and as stewards of a real estate transaction.
  - Use buyer agency agreements and know how to explain them to buyer-clients. These agreements maximize transparency, ensure clarity and understanding, formalize the professional working relationship, detail what services consumers are entitled to and what the buyer agent expects from their client in return.
  - Remind all clients that commissions are established by contract and are not fixed, controlled or recommended by law and are fully negotiable.
  - Educate sellers on what options they have in marketing the property, including offering compensation to a buyer's broker.

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*NAR Settlement**(Continued from page 8)***NEW FORMS**

**Michigan REALTORS® has drafted new forms for the use of members. These will be available on Dotloop and Zipforms in the Michigan REALTORS® Library:**

1. Listing Agreement (Forms B and BB)
2. Exclusive Buyer Agency Agreement (Forms J and JJ)
3. Broker to Broker Compensation Agreement

**Addendums to Purchase Agreement:**

4. Seller Concession Addendum
5. Buyer Broker Compensation Addendum

**QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

- Q: Does the Realtor® Code of Ethics prohibit using a buyer's offer to negotiate compensation to the buyer's broker?  
 A: No. If the buyer has a written agreement in place with their broker that requires the buyer to pay that broker a specific amount, then the buyer can attempt to pass on that payment obligation to the seller via the purchase agreement.
- Q: How will a buyer's agent know if a seller/listing agent is offering compensation to a buyer's broker?  
 A: Agents can directly communicate offers of compensation via phone, text, email, etc. Listing brokerages can display offers of compensation on their websites for THEIR OWN listings.
- Q: What happens if the seller and/or the listing broker have offered to pay the buyer's broker more than what the buyer agreed to pay their broker (via the buyer's broker contract)?  
 A: In that case, the buyer's broker could not keep those excess funds. The settlement agreement states that if a buyer's broker is receiving compensation from another source (for example, a seller or listing broker) then that payment cannot exceed the amount that was agreed upon in the buyer's broker contract.
- Q: What happens if a buyer broker cannot get timely information from a listing broker about offers of compensation?  
 A: The settlement does not change the ethical duties that Realtors® owe to their clients. Realtors® are required to protect and promote the interests of their clients and treat all parties in a transaction honestly (Article 1, COE).
- Q: How will the prohibition on offers of compensation on the MLS affect pending transactions/current sales?  
 A: Until the rule changes go into effect, offers of compensation are still permitted on the MLS. After the changes go into effect (August 17, 2024), listing agreements should be amended to reflect that offers of compensation cannot be communicated via the MLS.
- Q: Can a listing broker still offer compensation to a buyer's broker?  
 A: Yes – it just cannot be communicated via the MLS. If a listing broker is offering compensation to a buyer's broker, they must: Disclose to the seller (in writing) the amount of compensation to be offered to a buyer's broker; and Obtain the seller's approval for any payment made to a buyer's broker.
- Q: What triggers the requirement to have a written agreement in place with a buyer?  
 A: The written agreement is triggered by two events: "Working with" a buyer (providing brokerage services to a buyer); and "Touring a home" (including virtual tours).
- Q: Are there any mandatory provisions that must be included in the written agreement?  
 A: Yes. Pursuant to the NAR settlement agreement (paragraph 58(vi)), written buyer agreements must: State the amount/rate of any compensation the MLS Participant will receive; Include a provision that MLS Participants may not receive compensation from any source that exceeds the amount/rate agreed to with the buyer; Disclose in conspicuous language that broker commissions are not set by law and are fully negotiable.
- Q: What happens if an unrepresented buyer reaches out to the listing agent directly for a showing or attends an open house? Does the listing agent need a written agreement in place with that buyer?  
 A: No. A listing agent does not need to enter into a written agreement with an unrepresented buyer before showing the home to that buyer. But, the listing agent must make certain the buyer understands that the listing agent is representing the seller – not the buyer.  
 NOTE: The answer is different if the buyer is seeking services from the listing agent beyond simply being shown the property.