

**HOUGHTON COUNTY BOARD OF
COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING
MARCH 15, 2022**

The Houghton County Board of Commissioners held a Regular Meeting on Tuesday, March 15, 2022 at 5:00 p.m. in the 5th Floor Conference Room of the Courthouse, City of Houghton and public viewing in person and by Zoom.

Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order by Vice-Chairman Tom Tikkanen at 5:00 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance:

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Vice-Chairman Tikkanen.

Roll call:

The following Commissioners responded to roll call done by the County Clerk, Jennifer Kelly:

Tom Tikkanen, District 1; Albert Koskela, District 2; Glenn Anderson, District 3; Gretchen Janssen, District 4; Roy Britz, District 5.

Approval of Minutes:

A Motion was made by Commissioner Janssen and seconded by Commissioner Tikkanen to approve the minutes of the February 15, 2022 and the March 8, 2022 meetings as presented.

The Motion carried by a voice vote. Ayes 5, Nays 0.

Approval of Agenda/Additions:

Commissioner Anderson asked for the following:

1. A Public hearing be added to the beginning the April 12th meeting for discussion for the public to comment on the expenditures of the ARPA funds. (#6) Elizabeth Bjorn to advertise for the public hearing.
2. The Probate/Family Court Judge's request for ARPA funds to be discussed. The budgeted money was stopped in 2019 due to COVID. (#7) Add #7 to the agenda to discuss the carpeting for Probate/Family Court.
3. Add discussion of the four (4) Sheriff Department requests for ARPA funds. (#7A)

Elizabeth Bjorn, Administrator, asked that #3 on the Agenda be changed from Savannah Dougherty to Matt Laird.

A Motion was made by Chairman Koskela, seconded by Commissioner Janssen to approve the Agenda with the three (3) additions and the one (1) change as presented.

The Motion carried by a voice vote: Ayes 5, Nays 0.

Public Comments-Agenda Items only *(5 minute limit):

Horst Schmitt commented on J #2 on the Agenda and asked how many lawsuits the County is participating in. Elizabeth Bjorn, Administrator, stated the County is only participating in one (1) with J&J Settlement.

Approval of Bills:

A Motion was made by Commissioner Britz and seconded by Chairman Koskela to approve paying the bills submitted of \$2,404,648.58.

The Motion carried by the following vote.

YES: Britz, Koskela, Tikkanen, Anderson, Janssen 5.

NO: None 0.

None.

Correspondence:

1. The Board discussed the disposal rate increase for Waste Management effective April 2022. Elizabeth Bjorn, Administrator, will look into the contract with Waste Management, and the Board will have further discussion at the April meeting.
2. The Board discussed an email from Keweenaw Waterway. Roy Britz's correspondence.
3. Environmental Law & Policy Center Memorandum regarding the Sturgeon River Gorge Wilderness.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson and seconded by Commissioner Janssen to support the 16,744 acres of wilderness be added to the Sturgeon River Gorge.

The Motion carried by a voice vote. Ayes 4, Nays 1.

4. An Email from Derek Bradway regarding a campground being built near Coles Creek in the City of Houghton.

Reports:

Standing Committee:

Commissioner Britz reported to the Board on the following:

Snowfall: January 157" this year compared to the 115" January in 2021.

Houghton County Road Commission ARPA funds. Will discuss later in agenda.

Commissioner Janssen had nothing to report to the Board.

Commissioner Anderson reported to the Board on the following:

Cruise Ships: Commissioner Anderson discussed the seven (7) Viking and two (2) Victory cruise ships that will be visiting Houghton County. He thanked the City of Houghton. There may be one (1) additional cruise ship this summer.

Houghton County Sheriff Department: Commissioner Anderson requested Sheriff Saaranen to acknowledge if Kevin Coppo was on authorized training, and using a County credit card downstate for travel expenses, due to the Board of Commissioners not approving a travel request. He expressed his disappointment since Kevin Coppo was representing Houghton County downstate. Commissioner Britz stated the 911 Board approved his travel request.

Airport:

Commissioner Anderson discussed SkyWest/United dropping 29 cities. Houghton is the third strongest city.

Chairman Koskela had nothing to report to the Board.

Commissioner Tikkanen reported to the Board on the following:

2nd Bridge: The Committee will continue to work with the legislatures for a feasibility study to be done for a 2nd bridge to be built.

Cruise Ships: He also thanked the City of Houghton.

Airport: Commissioner Tikkanen stated Houghton County has been trying for years to get Delta to provide service to Houghton County. Houghton County will not lose total service at the airport.

County Officers:

Dennis Hext, Airport Manager, informed the Board that SkyWest does not want to stop working with Houghton County. The notification to Houghton County was driven by United. He encouraged the Commissioners to contact the Senators. He is working with the DOT and SkyWest on a proposal that is due on April 11, 2022 to find a replacement carrier. If Houghton County does not get any bids, it will go out again for more bids. There is a shortage of pilots.

The runway at the Airport is set to be resurfaced in 2023. They are working on a design for the terminal that will be presented to the Commissioners.

Commissioner Anderson requested Dennis Hext to provide the Commissioners with a copy of the April 11, 2022 proposal.

Dennis Hext stated the airlines can pick what hub they want to choose.

Judge Daavettila, District Court Judge, discussed his letter that was sent to Administrator Bjorn.

Josh Saaranen, Sheriff, stated they have had 647 complaints. They currently have an average of 20 inmates per day. He has sworn in Jon Giachino as the temporary Under Sheriff. Kevin Coppo has been put on personal leave of absence. Sheriff Saaranen stated Kevin did not have a County credit card with him downstate. Sheriff Saaranen discussed the press release that he did for three (3) people who were arrested for human trafficking. The public can provide tips to the Sheriff Department on Houghtoncountysheriff.com.

Commissioner Anderson asked if body cameras would be mandated by the Sheriff. Sheriff Saaranen stated they would be mandated.

Old Business:

1. Coronavirus State & Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (CSLFRF)

Elizabeth Bjorn, Administrator, stated \$73,921.13 was the amount of COVID money used for employees for COVID leave from May 1, 2020 to December 31, 2021.

- a. Wage Studies or Surveys

Elizabeth Bjorn, Administrator, discussed the Department of Labor site that can be used free of charge.

Lisa Mattila, Treasurer, had reached out to others for municipal comparison studies.

MERSER charged \$9,900-\$21,000 for the same information that is obtained on the Department of Labor's free website.

Commissioner Tikkanen asked if the County can obtain the information. Administrator Bjorn stated the information in the Board's packet is by occupational code, and she is relatively comfortable with the free site. Fringe benefits are not included in this data.

Commissioner Britz stated the County needs a comparison as to what the Houghton County employees do compared to other courthouses.

Administrator Bjorn suggested the first step is to update job descriptions, and factoring in the benefit portions for the employees.

Commissioner Tikkanen discussed finding an outside source for a job description update.

Administrator Bjorn stated she is comfortable with the US Bureau of Labor statistics for wage statistics. The information is U.P. specific on what an average wage would be for a specific code.

Commissioner Tikkanen suggested Houghton County find a potential outside source. Administrator Bjorn will get in contact and get an estimate for the April 12, 2022 meeting.

b. Department Head Project Priority Lists

Elizabeth Bjorn, Administrator, discussed the lists that were in the Board packets for the departments wish lists, and a letter from Judge Daavettila. The deadline for requests from department heads will be by the April 12, 2022 deadline and a work session after that, and then vote on priorities.

Commissioner Tikkanen discussed the estimate for a new semi and trail for the Transfer Station for \$250,000.00, a concrete pad behind the building \$17,000.00 (may be eligible for possible grant money), new open top containers \$45,000.00, and a waste oil furnace \$11,000.00. This furnace would heat the mechanic shop. Total of \$323,000.00.

Commissioner Britz would like more firm bids and information if a grant/loan can be submitted.

A Motion was done by Commissioner Britz and seconded by Chairman Koskela to have the Transfer Station follow up and get firm estimates on their four (4) items.

The Motion carried by a voice vote. Ayes 5, Nays 0.

Administrator Bjorn will inform the manager at the Transfer Station.

District Court: Judge Daavettila requested the following:

1. Premium pay for courthouse and county employees. He questioned the qualifications of some of the requests that have been submitted to the Board according to the rule for the use of the ARPA funds. He stated premiums for employees are an authorized expense.
2. Security issues. He requested more time to get estimates for District Court. There is no barrier for the public and his staff in District Court.
3. Bailiff. He would like funding for a bailiff on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 8:30 am to Noon. It must be an armed Sheriff. Look into traffic flow for Court days for the public, Defendants and Attorneys.

The Board agreed to add District Court to #7 with Probate/Family Court on the Agenda.

2. J&J Settlement Status Correspondence.

Elizabeth Bjorn, Administrator, said it was non-FOIAable.

New Business:

1. 44 North-Employee Life Insurance Renewal Comparative Rate Sheet

Elizabeth Bjorn, Administrator, stated the County currently has Mutual of Omaha for life insurance for County employees. With the assistance of Bonnie Nelson from 44 North, if the County were to change to One America for life insurance coverage, it would be a savings for the County over the next two (2) years of \$17,500.00.

A Motion was made by Chairman Koskela and seconded by Commissioner Anderson to accept the recommendation of 44 North and switch to One America for our life insurance company.

The Motion carried by a voice vote. Ayes 5, Nays 0.

2. Houghton County Area-Appointment of Sub-Committee

Commissioner Anderson discussed having 2 members of the Board meet with the Hancock City Council regarding the Houghton County Arena. He recommended appointing Commissioners Janssen and Britz to the sub-committee. Chairman Koskela recommended Commissioner Tikkanen be the alternate.

A Motion was made by Chairman Koskela and seconded by Commissioner Anderson to appoint Commissioners Janssen and Anderson to meet with the Hancock City Council regarding the Houghton County Arena. Commissioner Tikkanen will be the alternate.

The Motion carried by a voice vote. Ayes 5, Nays 0.

3. Savannah Dougherty-Michigan Works

Matt Laird gave a presentation to the Board in place of Savannah Dougherty at the request of Jennifer Kelly, County Clerk/Register of Deeds. Clerk Kelly submitted the online application through MI Works Youth program for the County Clerk's Office. MI Works has a young youths program available and funded and paid for by MI Works through a large grant they received. The program is for people 16-24 years of age. MI Works pays 100% of their wages. It is a yearlong grant.

Savannah Dougherty or Matt Laird will provide an agreement to the Board at the April 12, 2022 meeting for the Board to review.

4. Annual Renewal Management of America Consulting, LLC Agreement

Elizabeth Bjorn, Administrator, advised that the Renewal Agreement is for the offices of the Friend of the Court and the Prosecuting Attorney for their revenues.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson and seconded by Commissioner Janssen to approve the Annual Renewal Management of America Consulting, LLC Agreement as presented for \$7,700.00.

The Motion carried by a voice vote. Ayes 5, Nays 0.

5. Veterans Board Re-Appointments

A Motion was made by Chairman Koskela and seconded by Commissioner Britz to re-appoint Gene LaRochelle and Glenn Ekdahl to the Veterans Board.

The Motion carried by a voice vote. Ayes 5, Nays 0.

6. Public Hearing on April, 12, 2022 meeting

A Motion was made by Chairman Koskela and seconded by Commissioner Anderson to have a public meeting before the regular board meeting on April 12, 2022 to give the public an opportunity to comment on how the ARPA monies should be spent.

The Motion carried by a voice vote. Ayes 5, Nays 0.

7. Probate/Family Court

A Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson and seconded by Commissioner Britz to pay \$28,600.00 for the Probate/Family Court office upgrades (carpeting) with the ARPA funds

The Motion carried by a voice vote. Ayes 5, Nays 0.

a. District Court/Sheriff Department

Elizabeth Bjorn, Administrator, discussed the allotted premium pay that was limited to certain criteria that was paid to the airport and law enforcement employees.

The Board discussed security in the courthouse. Sheriff Saaranen discussed a full time deputy in the courthouse, which he would need an additional deputy to be hired to assist District Court.

Commissioner Britz and Sheriff Saaranen will schedule a law enforcement meeting to be held before the April 12, 2022 Board of Commissioners meeting.

Commissioner Anderson requested the law enforcement committee give a formal recommendation. Commissioner Anderson withdrew his Agenda item.

1. Travel

a. Jennifer Kelly/Clerk's Accreditation

Commissioner Anderson asked the amount of the request. ?? said it was \$750.00.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson, seconded by Commissioner Janssen to approve the travel request.

The Motion carried by a voice vote. Ayes 5, Nays 0.

2. Appropriations

- a. C.C. Mental Health -\$41,123.73
- b. W.U.P.P.D.R.-\$2,866.50

A Motion was made by Chairman Koskela, seconded by Commissioner Anderson to approve the two (2) above-mentioned appropriations as presented.

The Motion carried by a voice vote. Ayes 5, Nays 0.

Public Comments: (5 minute limit)

Darren Beiring addressed the Board about the Keweenaw Waters Resort. 79 full hookup campsites, and 29 cabins. The campground permit is being held up by the WUPHD. He requested help from the Board to help them get the permit issued.

Leander Somero addressed the Board about the Keweenaw Waters Resort. He discussed the stamp sands. He requested the Boards help to get the permit issued. They hope to open the campground in 2023. The EGLE and the EPEA campground departments have approved the sites clean and ok to redevelop the land.

George Kiiskila addressed the Board regarding the Keweenaw Waters Resort. He said it usually takes 30 days to get a permit approved. He stated the City of Houghton Planning Commission has already given their approval, and the EPEA, and EGLE have given verbal sign offs.

Commissioner Tikkanen stated three (3) Houghton County Commissioners serve on the WUPHD Board. They are meeting on Monday, March 28, 2022. Commissioners

Janssen, Britz, and Anderson will follow up at next meeting and find out why there is a hold up on the permit.

Derek Bradway addressed the Board regarding the Keweenaw Waters Resort. He provided books as to what has been given to the WUPHD. He showed on displays the campsites and cabins. He requested the Boards help to get the permit issued.

Craig Waddell addressed the Board regarding the Keweenaw Waters Resort, and questioned if the County could fly a Ukraine flag or do something to show the support for the Ukraine people.

Faith Morrison addressed the Board and thanked them for having Zoom. She questioned the Board as to why some items on the Agenda were omitted from the packet on the website as it made it hard for people to follow the Agenda.

Elizabeth Bjorn, Administrator, stated information came in the day of the Board meeting, so it was added.

Commissioner Tikkanen stated Houghton County financially supports the WUPHD. The next WUPHD meeting is on March 28, 2022 at 6:00 p.m. at the Hancock office.

Announcements:

None.

Adjournment:

A Motion was made by Commissioner Tikkanen and seconded by Commissioner Janssen to adjourn at 7:25 pm.

The Motion carried by a voice vote. Ayes 5, Nays 0.

Albert Koskela, Chairman

Jennifer Kelly, County Clerk