

**HOUGHTON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
REGULAR MEETING  
AUGUST 9, 2022**

The Houghton County Board of Commissioners held a Regular Meeting on Tuesday, August 9, 2022 at 5:00 p.m. in the 5<sup>th</sup> Floor Conference Room of the Courthouse, City of Houghton and public viewing in person and by Zoom.

A. Call to Order:

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

B. Pledge of Allegiance:

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Chairman Tikkanen.

C. Roll call:

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

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

D. Approval of Minutes:

A Motion was made by Commissioner Janssen and seconded by Commissioner Britz to approve the minutes of the July 12, 2022 meeting as presented.

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

E. Approval of Agenda/Additions:

Administrator Bjorn asked that #7c be added for Clerk Kelly for \$1,544 for a Register of Deeds Conference.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Janssen, seconded by Commissioner Britz to approve the Agenda with the one (1) addition as presented.

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

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

Nickole Jollimore addressed the Board regarding #J b on the Agenda. She informed the Board that there have been 369 Misdemeanors and 116 Felonies to date. She requested the Board approve the funding for the safety of all the workers and the public.

G. Approval of Bills:

A Motion was made by Commissioner Janssen and seconded by Commissioner Britz to approve paying the bills submitted of \$1,873,746.69.

The Motion carried by the following vote.

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

NO: None 0.

H. Correspondence:

Elizabeth Bjorn, Administrator, discussed a letter from the American Bird Conservancy regarding concerns on windmills, an email regarding the opioid litigation that is not

subject to FOIA, and an email from a resident in Kearsarge wanting an update on the status of a second bridge.

Reports:

1. Standing Committee:

Commissioner Codere reported to the Board on the following:

Trails: He attended a trails meeting with the DNR. The DNR stated the repairs will not be done this year, but should be done by the 2023 winter by six (6) local contractors. They will temporarily fix the trails in Adams Townships and then be repaired next year.

Houghton Douglas Falls-Received a \$300,000 grant-engineering work will start, and it will take a number of years and encouraged the Board members to lobby.

Commissioner Janssen reported to the Board on the following:

Commissioner Anderson reported to the Board on the following:

Houghton County Fair: The Fair will be from August 25-28, 2022.

He congratulated Joel Keranen on winning the Primary race for Commissioner District 2, and congratulated Dan Wartrous for receiving enough votes as a Democrat written in for Commissioner District 2.

Trails: Discussed the importance of the Houghton Douglas Falls. Adams Township is working with the DNR to repair the trail which will cost an estimated \$1.5 million. Adams Township is working on replacing the main water line. The DNR wants an easement. Two (2) easements were done in 1990.

MTU childcare: There are currently 300 licensed slots. They need about 700 more. Commissioner Anderson questioned if employers are interested in the County to address this issue.

Houghton County Arena: The ice should be ready on September 19, 2022.

Commissioner Britz reported to the Board on the following:

Jail: He discussed the ARPA monies given to the Sheriff Department.

Airport: The Airpark Boulevard sign has been ordered for the Albert Koskela road dedication.

Chassell Township: The Attorney has stated there were errors in the letter regarding money being spent on the repairing of Rajala Road with the APRA money.

Church property: He had a meeting John Paul Pietila in August, and John Paul will bring the matter to the congregation and report back to the Board before the September monthly Board meeting.

Emergency Department: Chris VanArsdale sent an email to the Board regarding his projects.

Chairman Tikkanen reported to the Board on the following:

2<sup>nd</sup> Bridge: He hopes to have a meeting with Greg Markkanen soon, and possibly get a feasibility study done. Commissioner Janssen will participate. He stated Senator McBroom tried to get a feasibility study done, and it is in the top 10 of his requests for the 2023 budget.

3. County Officers:

Dennis Hext, Airport Manager, stated the passenger and cargo are going well. The runway will be redone.

Nicholas Daavettila, District Court Judge, thanked the Board for their consideration on the courthouse safety and single point entry.

Joshua Saaranen, Sheriff, stated there has been 1830 complaints this year, and there are currently 22 inmates and 8 inmates at the work camp. A jail inspection was done and the jail is in compliance, but the jail is in need of repairs. He will share the report with the Board when he receives it. The ARPA projects are going well.

Lisa McKenzie, Hancock City Council, discussed a zoning meeting scheduled for Wednesday, August 10<sup>th</sup>. They are hoping to redevelop businesses.

Tim Gasperich, Calumet Township Supervisor, stated they hoped to have ice at the Colosseum by October 1, 2022.

I. Old Business:

1. American Rescue Plan (CSLFRF) \$6.8 million

a. Trail Location Sign Project - \$10,000

Commissioner Britz stated Chris VanArsdale prepared a letter requesting to expand the trail from Chassell to Baraga and Chassell to Houghton. He stated Joe Schneller had received approximately \$15,000 in donations. He would like to increase the amount from \$10,000 to \$15,000.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Janssen, and seconded by Commissioner Britz to groom 2 trails from Chassell to Baraga and have mapping for emergencies.

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

Commissioner Britz stated Joe Schneller donates his time.

Commissioner Anderson asked how many signs per mile can be done for \$15,000. And requested receipts for expenditures.

Commissioner Codere requested Joe Schneller provide a proposal for fuel and materials before the next work session.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Britz and seconded by Commissioner Anderson to approve \$11,000.00 for materials and \$4,000 in gas for Joe Schneller to use towards the signs on the trails in Houghton County. Joe Schneller is to provide receipts to Administrator Bjorn.

b. Courthouse Safety and Single Point of Enter – UPEA

Karin Cooper, UP Engineer, discussed the committee that addressed critical safety issues in the courthouse for the courts and a single point entrance. She stated the total would be between \$500,000-\$750,000.

Chairman Tikkanen encouraged the Board to look into this more.

New Business:

1. MSHDA MI-Housing Opportunity Promoting Energy Efficiency Program –MI Hope

Administrator Bjorn requested support from the Board for \$28,500.00.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson and seconded by Commissioner Janssen to send a letter of support to MSHDA for the MI Hope program.

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

## 2. Scheduling of Work Group Session -Commissioners

A Motion to schedule the next work group session on August 22, 2022 at 12:00 pm was made by Commissioner Anderson and supported by Commissioner Britz.

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

## 3. PT IT Position

Administrator Bjorn stated the application was in the Boards packet and was not subject to FOIA. An interview was held via zoom. Tom Ressler made observations.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Codere and seconded by Commissioner Britz to create a part-time IT position, and have Tom Ressler do the hiring.

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

## 4. Travel

- a. Melissa Schwenn FOC-Court Enforcement Training \$1,293
- b. Brittany Bulleit-PA Conference \$1,668
- c. Jennifer Kelly-Register of Deeds Summer Conference-Automation Fund \$1,544.00

A Motion was made by Commissioner Janssen and seconded by Commissioner Codere to approve the above-mentioned travel requests.

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

## 5. Appropriations

- a. WUPPDR - \$2,866.50

A Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson, seconded by Commissioner Codere to approve the above-mentioned appropriation as presented.

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

Administrator Bjorn stated a draft of the proposed budget will be provided to the Board in August.

## L. Public Comments: (5 minute limit)

Lisa McKenzie and Mary Ellen Hyttinen discussed the MI Hope program and asked for a letter of support for WUPPDR.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Janssen and seconded by Commissioner Anderson to approve a letter of support to WUPPDR for \$1 million for the MI Hope program.

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

Mary Ellen asked why the Board was spending money at the current courthouse/jail if the Board was looking at new property.

Commissioner Codere stated the Board should look at equipment that could be moved to a new facility.

Dan Holcomb asked what the price is of a new jail.

Chairman Tikkanen stated the Board has no updated figures, no plans, but the Board is trying to put effort into securing a piece of property.

M. Announcements:

None.

N. Adjournment:

A Motion was made by Commissioner Codere and seconded by Commissioner Anderson to adjourn at 6:26 pm.

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

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Tom Tikkanen, Chairman

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Jennifer Kelly, County Clerk