

**HOUGHTON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING
OCTOBER 10, 2023**

The Houghton County Board of Commissioners held a Regular Meeting on Tuesday, October 10, 2023 at 4:00 p.m. in the Probate/Family Courtroom on the 2nd Floor of the Courthouse, City of Houghton with the public viewing in person and by Microsoft Teams.

Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Tikkanen at 4:00 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance:

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Chairman Tikkanen.

Roll Call:

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

Tom Tikkanen, District 1; Joel Keranen, District 2; Glenn Anderson, District 3; Gretchen Janssen, District 4.

Absent: Roy Britz, District 5.

Approval of Minutes-September 12th Regular Meeting & September 21st Special Meeting:

A Motion was made by Commissioner Janssen and seconded by Commissioner Anderson to approve the minutes of the September 12th and September 21st meetings as presented.

The Motion carried by a voice vote. Ayes 4, Nays 0.

Approval of Agenda/Additions:

Judge Brittany Bulleit asked if #8 under New Business could be moved to #1.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Janssen and seconded by Commissioner Anderson to approve the Agenda as presented with the one (1) change.

The Motion carried by a voice vote. Ayes 4, Nays 0.

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

None.

Approval of Bills -\$5,003,963.25:

A Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson and seconded by Commissioner Janssen to approve paying the bills submitted of \$5,003,963.25.

The Motion carried by the following vote.

YES: Anderson, Janssen, Tikkanen, Keranen, 4.

NO: None 0.

ABSENT: Britz 1.

Correspondence:

None.

Reports:

Standing Committee:

Commissioner Keranen reported to the Board on the following:

Houghton County Planning Commission: He discussed their meeting and thanked Administrator Larson for helping.

Commissioner Anderson reported to the Board on the following:

Houghton County Fair: He thanked Sheriff Saaranen and the Hancock City Police for having a presence and assisting in keeping everyone safe at the Fair.

Recreational Authority: He discussed the \$10.2 million dollar Trail Development project from Lake Linden to Dollar Bay. That project is now almost complete. He discussed \$2.5 million in FEMA funds and great support from the DNR and many contractors. There will be a ribbon ceremony in November or December.

DNR: The Freda trail is on the DNR's plans and has engineering looking at the trail. He discussed the Bill Nichols trail to replace 21 culverts, however the grant was denied. They are reapplying. Trail 15 from Baraga to Chassell is closed. They are working on a route on the Chassell to Painesdale trail.

Keweenaw Trails: He attended a presentation, and there will be a new Snowmobile Grooming Maintenance Garage Facility building in Calumet Township this winter. They have raised \$300,000 in materials and in kind labor to get the garage to the current state of completion. This expanded facility will better serve the Groomers who keep our trail system which is the biggest in the Midwest to a much better state. Right now they are stored and worked on in Mohawk in an antiquated garage without heat nor the space to work on them and thaw them in between uses.

Chassell joined the Recreational Authority. Chad VanBennecom applied for a motorized grant for the Snowmobile Groomer Maintenance Garage.

Commissioner Janssen had nothing to report to the Board.

Chairman Tikkanen reported to the Board on the following:

BHK: He attended a presentation by Steve Pelli about options for locals through the Department of Labor.

Copper Country Mental Health Services: There will be a celebration of the 60th Anniversary for Copper Country Mental Services on Wednesday, October 18th from 5-6:30 pm at all locations in Houghton, Baraga, Keweenaw, Ontonagon and Gogebic Counties.

County Officers:

Todd LaRoux, Building Department, stated there have been 380 building permits year to date compared to 341 last year. He attended a Code Enforcement conference and accepted a Director's position on the Board.

Joshua Saaranen, Sheriff, stated there are currently 18-23 inmates daily and they have received 2,170 complaints this year.

Jennifer Kelly, County Clerk, advised the Board of the upcoming possible 2024 election dates, and talked about Proposal 2, and a Regional Training with the City and Township Clerks.

Old Business:

1. None.

New Business:

8. PA Office

Judge Brittany Bulleit stated that she is statutorily obligated to appoint the next Prosecutor in Houghton County. She will be doing three (3) interviews. She asked that the Board to wait to do any Motions until she does the interviews. She advised the Board that the Attorney General is working with cases at this time in Houghton County.

1. Mike Bach-Copper Country Mental Health Presentation

Mike Bach gave a history of Copper Country Mental Health starting back in 1963, and then discussed the upcoming 60-year celebration for Copper Country Mental Health and stated it was open to all citizens. There will be coffee, cookies and a raffle. He provided flyers to the Board regarding the programs they offer. He discussed the training, grant work and outpatient services. They provide community-based services. They currently operate nine (9) group homes. There is 1 in Ontonagon, 2 in Baraga and 6 in Houghton County. He stated patients in crisis cost approximately \$1,000 or more per day. There were 66 transports this past fiscal year. They try to work with the families. The hospitals do the assessments for non-Medicaid patients. Copper Country Mental Health does the assessments for Medicaid patients. He talked about the local Mental Health Services.

Administrator Larson stated it costs approximately \$3,000 to transport mental health patients downstate. He thanked Copper Country Mental Health and the Houghton Sheriff Department for helping in the transports.

2. 1999 Western Star Bid Opening

Chairman Tikkanen stated there was 1 sealed bid. The Bid was from Schaaf Trucking & Repair for \$7,777.77.

Administrator Larson advised that he and Curt Judson recommend selling it. The motor that was repaired recently likely makes this worth the money. This is an old semi tractor, but it still has life and we would be happy to sell it to the Schaaf's.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson and seconded by Commissioner Janssen to sell the 1999 Western Star vehicle for \$7,777.77 to Schaaf Trucking & Repair.

The Motion carried by the following vote.

YES: Anderson, Janssen, Tikkanen, Keranen 4.

NO: None. 0

ABSENT: Britz 1

3. FY24 County Innovation Grant Approval

Chairman Tikkanen stated the VA Office received a \$56,649.30 grant that will be for October 1, 2023 to September 30, 2024. It will be paid on a reimbursement basis by County VSO Joe Battisfore.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson and seconded by Commissioner Janssen to accept the \$56,649.30 grant as presented.

The Motion carried by a voice vote. Ayes 4, Nays 0.

4. Resolution 23-19 Snowbelt Transit Commission Support

Administrator Larson had discussion with the trail groups.

Chairman Tikkanen stated Gogebic and Ontonagon are forming groups and possible business opportunities for mining and transit in Western UP Counties.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson and seconded by Commissioner Janssen to adopt Resolution #23-19 as presented.

The Motion carried by the following vote.

YES: Anderson, Janssen, Tikkanen, Keranen 4.

NO: None 0

ABSENT: BRITZ 1



SUPPORTING THE FORMATION OF THE SNOWBELT TRANSIT COMMISSION RESOLUTION #23-19

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF HOUGHTON COUNTY,

Whereas; the economy of the Western UP has been devastated by the closure of the White Pine Mine (1997) and the Paper Mill (2013) in Ontonagon County as well as the Ojibwa Prison in Gogebic County.

Whereas; the rail line from Rockland to Ontonagon has been removed.

Whereas; tourism has been the largest economic engine which was negatively impacted during COVID.

Whereas; the second largest economy, logging, is currently being negatively impacted by increasing fuel prices and a crumbling infrastructure; this further affects the tourism industry as well as residents.

Whereas; companies and primary wage earner jobs have left the Counties and many companies are discouraged from coming to the Western UP due to the lack of a sufficient logistical network.

Whereas; the two counties of Gogebic, and Ontonagon can work together to preserve a vital network for economic growth going forward.

Whereas; the abandonment of the rail line has crippled the ability to attract new industries.

Whereas; the purpose of the Snowbelt Transit Commission is to acquire and to preserve the Out of Service/Abandoned rail line from the Wisconsin/Michigan border to White Pine, Michigan, while keeping intact the multi-use trails that help support tourism and to ensure the future growth of the Western Upper Peninsula.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that HOUGHTON COUNTY supports the formation of a new Transit Commission to be called the Snowbelt Transit Commission.

Moved by Commissioner:

Supported by Commissioner:

Roll Call Vote:

Yes:

No:

Motion Carried.

RESOLUTION DECLARED ADOPTED.

Tom Tikkanen, Chairman
Houghton County Board of Commission

Date

I, Jennifer Kelly, County Clerk of Houghton County, do hereby certify and set my seal to the above Resolution as adopted October 10, 2023, at the Houghton County Courthouse, 401 East Houghton Avenue, Houghton, MI 49931.

Jennifer Kelly, Houghton County Clerk

5. Benefit E COLA Defined Benefit Adoption Agreement

Administrator Larson informed the Board that they vote on this every year and the Board should accept the evaluation and pay COLA effective 2024.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson and seconded by Commissioner Janssen to adopt the Benefit E COLA Defined Benefit Adoption Agreement as presented.

The Motion carried by the following vote.

YES: Anderson, Janssen, Tikkanen, Keranen, 4.

NO: None. 0

ABSENT: Britz 1

6. Interlocal Agreement & Designated Assessor

Chairman Tikkanen stated the County is required to have an Assessor.

Jaikob Djerf, Equalization Director, stated the County is required to have a designated assessor. The County is not in compliance without a Designated Assessor and an Interlocal Agreement. During the 2024-2025 cycle, Houghton County will likely be visited and this matter will be reviewed. He discussed 2 proposals from local Assessors that are willing to work in this role if called up, and have credentials. The First was from Elizabeth Anderson, and the second was from TAG Consulting (Tim & Ann Gasperich).

Administrator Larson stated that the Designated Assessor would not be called unless a municipality was found to be out of compliance with their assessing. As nobody is in trouble now, this hopefully will never be a problem, but having this in place helps us if an issue ever arises.

Jaikob has written an Interlocal Agreement and has the Designated Assessor document ready to disperse to our Townships. He said that a simple majority of the Townships is required to sign the Interlocal Agreement and agree to the Board's appointment. Jaikob will mail the Designated Assessor and Interlocal Agreement to the State if a majority of the Townships agree to it.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson and seconded by Commissioner Janssen to appoint TAG Consulting as the Houghton County Designated Assessor.

The Motion carried by the following vote.

YES: Anderson, Janssen, Tikkanen, Keranen, 4.

NO: None. 0

ABSENT: Britz 1

7. Houghton County Equalization-Apportionment Report

Jaikob Djerf, Equalization Director, presented the Apportionment Report to the Board.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Janssen and seconded by Commissioner Anderson to adopt the Houghton County Equalization-Apportionment Report as presented.

The Motion carried by the following vote.

YES: Janssen, Anderson, Tikkanen, Keranen, 4.
NO: None. 0
ABSENT: Britz 1

9. Resolution 23-20 PA 152

Administrator Larson stated we have a healthy County, and we are working on the renewal for the County's health plans right now. PA 152 allows us to Opt out and this move which we do every year helps to keep health costs at a minimum.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Janssen and seconded by Commissioner Anderson to adopt Resolution #23-20 PA 152 as presented.

The Motion carried by the following vote.

YES: Janssen, Anderson, Tikkanen, Keranen, 4.
NO: None. 0
ABSENT: Britz 1

**EXEMPTION RESOLUTION
TO ADOPT THE ANNUAL EXEMPTION OPTION AS SET FORTH IN 2011 PUBLIC
ACT 152, THE PUBLICLY FUNDED HEALTH INSURANCE CONTRIBUTION ACT
Resolution #23-20**

WHEREAS, 2011 Public Act 152 (the "Act") was passed by the State Legislature and signed by the Governor on September 24, 2011;

WHEREAS, the Act contains three options for complying with the requirements of the Act;

WHEREAS, the three options are as follows:

- 1) Section 3 - "Hard Caps" Option - limits a public employer's total annual health care costs for employees based on coverage levels, as defined in the Act;
- 2) Section 4 - "80%/20%" Option - limits a public employer's share of total annual health care costs to not more than 80%. This option requires an annual majority vote of the governing body;
- 3) Section 8 - "Exemption" Option - a local unit of government, as defined in the Act, may exempt itself from the requirements of the Act by an annual 2/3 vote of the governing body;

WHEREAS, the County of Houghton has decided to adopt the annual Exemption option as its choice of compliance under the Act;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED the County of Houghton elects to comply with the requirements of 2011 Public Act 152, the Publicly Funded Health Insurance Contribution Act, by adopting the annual Exemption option for the medical benefit plan coverage year January, 1st, 2024 through December, 31st, 2024.

Moved by Commissioner:

Supported by Commissioner:

Roll Call Vote:
Yes:
No:
Motion Carried.

RESOLUTION DECLARED ADOPTED.

Tom Tikkanen, Chairman
Houghton County Board of Commission

Date

I, Jennifer Kelly, County Clerk of Houghton County, do hereby certify and set my seal to the above Resolution as adopted October 10, 2023, at the Houghton County Courthouse, 401 East Houghton Avenue, Houghton, MI 49931.

Jennifer Kelly, Houghton County Clerk

10. Building Department Truck

Todd LaRoux, Building Department, addressed the Board regarding purchasing a 2024 Chevrolet Truck for the Building Department from Keweenaw Chevrolet. The Building Department has money in their budget for the purchase.

Administrator Larson stated the County would not trade in the current truck. They would use it many other ways and stated that the demand for use of the County Chevy Equinox is increasing with more activities in the Friend of the Court, Equalization Office, and others who need to make trips locally and at a distance.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Keranen and seconded by Commissioner Anderson to purchase the 2024 Chevrolet truck with the Building Department funds from Keweenaw Chevrolet.

The Motion carried by the following vote.

YES: Keranen, Anderson, Tikkanen, Janssen 4.

NO: None. 0

ABSENT: Britz 1

11. Travel

a. Jennifer Kelly UCOA FALL CONFERENCE (\$1,010) & Software User Group Meeting (\$131) Budgeted Items

Motion was made by Commissioner Janssen and seconded by Commissioner Anderson to authorize the above-mentioned Travel requests as presented.

The Motion carried by a voice vote. Ayes 4, Nays 0.

12. Appropriations:

a. Western UP Health Department-\$68,081

b. Keweenaw Chamber of Commerce-\$400

a & b-A Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson and seconded by Commissioner Janssen to approve letters a & b as presented.

The Motion carried by a voice vote. Ayes 4, Nays 0.

Public Comments:

Faith Morrison addressed the Board and requested the packets online be the same as what the Board is receiving.

Betsy Barry addressed the Board regarding mental health transports. Sheriff Saaranen stated he has only spoken with the Michigan State Police.

Announcements:

Administrator Larson stated the elevator would be shut down in the courthouse for 7-10 days. There will be a new security camera in the elevator, new controls, a new lift motor, and other upgrades. He met the new KFC owner, Glen Flewelling with Inspector LaRoux to welcome him on his Grand Opening Day. He will be restarting the enduring gifts program, which encourages gifts and donations to County needs for anyone interested in supporting us. He met with Eric Waara, and Bruce Peterson and feels they are close to having a 425 Agreement for the Sharon Avenue property. He stated Amy Dolinky from the Michigan Association of Counties will be at the Courthouse at Noon on October 18th for a discussion on an impatient drug treatment and mental health center, and possible other uses for the Opioid Settlement Funds the County and neighboring counties are receiving.

Adjournment:

A Motion was made by Commissioner Keranen and seconded by Commissioner Tikkanen to adjourn at 5:04 p.m.

The Motion carried by a voice vote. Ayes 4, Nays 0.

Tom Tikkanen, Chairman

Jennifer Kelly, County Clerk