

Board Packet

1.

Public Act 152 requires a 2/3 vote of the Board of Commission to exempt the County from higher medical costs. This is a yearly occurrence, and if the Board adopts this the rates that we pay will remain lower. See Page 3 of the attachment

2. With great partnership from MD Deline from L'Anse, and spearheaded by the MDOT team, the Marina Plume issue has been cleared up. The cost to the County was zero, so a public thank you is in order for our two partners to get this issue fixed. They installed silt fencing, and made sure that the outlet and waterway were cleared out completely of the unwanted sediment. The County has five years to continue to make clean outs under a permit from EGLE and the Army Corps of Engineers-if needed. MDOT has said that they will continue to monitor the sump pond across Royce Road, and as the sediment continues to come onto the Marina Property and into the Portage Canal at the outlets. Pictures of the cleaned outlets and waterway are attached.

3. The local effort to collect letters of support for a Code of Federal Regulation to be considered by the US Coast Guard is complete. A packet of letters has been sent to the MDOT Regional Office in Marquette, and those letters are attached. The ask is for restrictions of the lift bridge during the morning and evening commute times for pleasure crafts. This will alleviate high traffic waits, congestion, and assist our Police, Fire, and EMS teams as they respond during these drivetimes.

4. The Torch Lake Federal Credit Union currently rents space in a County owned building in downtown Laurium. The Credit Union is possibly interested in purchasing the building, and the Board for the TLFCU is that consideration process now. Commissioners Tikkanen and Janssen recently went to look at the facility, and met with TLFCU staff.

5. The City of Hancock has approached the County about a possible transfer of ownership for the Houghton County Arena in Hancock. A recent walk around for the Commissioners and members of the Hancock City Council occurred at the Arena, and discussions are ongoing to possibly put this into Hancock City ownership and not the County.

PUBLICLY FUNDED HEALTH INSURANCE CONTRIBUTION ACT
Act 152 of 2011

AN ACT to limit a public employer's expenditures for employee medical benefit plans; to provide the power and duties of certain state agencies and officials; to provide for exceptions; and to provide for sanctions.

History: 2011, Act 152, Imd. Eff. Sept. 27, 2011.

The People of the State of Michigan enact:

15.561 Short title.

Sec. 1. This act shall be known and may be cited as the "publicly funded health insurance contribution act".

History: 2011, Act 152, Imd. Eff. Sept. 27, 2011.

15.562 Definitions.

Sec. 2. As used in this act:

(a) "Designated state official" means:

(i) For an election affecting employees and officers in the judicial branch of state government, the state court administrator.

(ii) For an election affecting senate employees and officers, the secretary of the senate.

(iii) For an election affecting house of representatives employees and officers, the clerk of the house.

(iv) For an election affecting legislative council employees, the legislative council.

(v) For an election affecting employees in the state classified service, the civil service commission.

(vi) For an election affecting executive branch employees who are not in the state classified service, the state employer.

(b) "Flexible spending account" means a medical expense flexible spending account in conjunction with a cafeteria plan as permitted under the federal internal revenue code of 1986.

(c) "Health savings account" means an account as permitted under section 223 of the internal revenue code of 1986, 26 USC 223.

(d) "Local unit of government" means a city, village, township, or county, a municipal electric utility system as defined in section 4 of the Michigan energy employment act of 1976, 1976 PA 448, MCL 460.804, an authority created under chapter VIA of the aeronautics code of the state of Michigan, 1945 PA 327, MCL 259.108 to 259.125c, or an authority created under 1939 PA 147, MCL 119.51 to 119.62.

(e) "Medical benefit plan" means a plan established and maintained by a carrier, a voluntary employees' beneficiary association described in section 501(c)(9) of the internal revenue code of 1986, 26 USC 501, or by 1 or more public employers, that provides for the payment of medical benefits, including, but not limited to, hospital and physician services, prescription drugs, and related benefits, for public employees or elected public officials. Medical benefit plan does not include benefits provided to individuals retired from a public employer or a public employer's contributions to a fund used for the sole purpose of funding health care benefits that are available to a public employee or an elected public official only upon retirement or separation from service.

(f) "Medical benefit plan costs" does not include a payment by the public employer to an employee or elected public official in lieu of medical benefit plan coverage and, for a medical benefit plan coverage year beginning after the later of January 1, 2014 or the effective date of the amendatory act that added this subdivision, includes, but is not limited to, all of the following:

(i) Any amount that the public employer pays directly or indirectly for the assessment levied pursuant to the health insurance claims assessment act, 2011 PA 142, MCL 550.1731 to 550.1741.

(ii) Insurance agent or company commissions.

(iii) Any additional amount the public employer is required to pay as a fee or tax under the patient protection and affordable care act, Public Law 111-148, as amended by the federal health care and education reconciliation act of 2010, Public Law 111-152.

(g) "Medical benefit plan coverage year" means the 12-month period after the effective date of the contractual or self-insured medical coverage plan that a public employer provides to its employees or public officials.

(h) "Public employer" means this state; a local unit of government or other political subdivision of this state; any intergovernmental, metropolitan, or local department, agency, or authority, or other local political subdivision; a school district, a public school academy, or an intermediate school district, as those terms are

defined in sections 4 to 6 of the revised school code, 1976 PA 451, MCL 380.4 to 380.6; a community college or junior college described in section 7 of article VIII of the state constitution of 1963; or an institution of higher education described in section 4 of article VIII of the state constitution of 1963.

History: 2011, Act 152, Imd. Eff. Sept. 27, 2011;—Am. 2013, Act 269, Imd. Eff. Dec. 30, 2013.

Compiler's note: Enacting section 1 of Act 269 of 2013 provides:

"Enacting section 1. This amendatory act clarifies the original intent of the legislature and is curative and retroactive as to the exclusion of funding for health care benefits that are available only upon either retirement or separation from service from the definition of medical benefit plan and as to the exclusion of payments in lieu of medical benefit plan coverage from medical benefit plan costs."

15.563 Public employer contribution to medical benefit plan; limitation on amount; allocation of payments; adjustment of maximum payment.

Sec. 3. (1) Except as otherwise provided in this act, a public employer that offers or contributes to a medical benefit plan for its employees or elected public officials shall pay no more of the annual costs or illustrative rate and any payments for reimbursement of co-pays, deductibles, or payments into health savings accounts, flexible spending accounts, or similar accounts used for health care costs, than a total amount equal to \$5,500.00 times the number of employees and elected public officials with single-person coverage, \$11,000.00 times the number of employees and elected public officials with individual-and-spouse coverage or individual-plus-1-nonspouse-dependent coverage, plus \$15,000.00 times the number of employees and elected public officials with family coverage, for a medical benefit plan coverage year beginning on or after January 1, 2012. A public employer may allocate its payments for medical benefit plan costs among its employees and elected public officials as it sees fit. By October 1 of each year after 2011 and before 2019, the state treasurer shall adjust the maximum payment permitted under this subsection for each coverage category for medical benefit plan coverage years beginning the succeeding calendar year, based on the change in the medical care component of the United States Consumer Price Index for the most recent 12-month period for which data are available from the United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. By April 1 of each year after 2018, the state treasurer shall adjust the maximum payment permitted under this subsection for each coverage category for medical benefit plan coverage years beginning the succeeding calendar year, based on the change in the medical care component of the United States Consumer Price Index for the most recent 12-month period for which data are available from the United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics.

(2) For a medical benefit plan coverage year beginning January 1, 2014 through December 31, 2014, the multiplier used to calculate the maximum public employer payment under subsection (1) is \$12,250.00 for employees and elected public officials with individual-and-spouse coverage or individual-plus-1-nonspouse-dependent coverage. The state treasurer shall adjust the multiplier each year as provided in subsection (1).

(3) For purposes of calculating a public employer's maximum total annual medical benefit plan costs under subsection (1), "employee or elected public official" does not include an employee or elected public official who declines the medical benefit plan offered or contributed to by the public employer.

History: 2011, Act 152, Imd. Eff. Sept. 27, 2011;—Am. 2013, Act 270, Imd. Eff. Dec. 30, 2013;—Am. 2018, Act 477, Imd. Eff. Dec. 27, 2018.

Compiler's note: Enacting section 1 of Act 270 of 2013 provides:

"Enacting section 1. Section 3(1) and (3) of the publicly funded health insurance contribution act, 2011 PA 152, MCL 15.563, as amended or added by this amendatory act, clarifies the original intent of the legislature that a public employee or elected official who declines the public employer's medical benefit plan coverage is not an employee or elected public official for purposes of calculating the public employer's maximum total annual medical benefit plan costs. These amendments are curative and apply retroactively."

15.564 Public employer contribution to medical benefit plan; limitation on percentage of annual costs; allocation of employees' share of total costs.

Sec. 4. (1) By a majority vote of its governing body each year, prior to the beginning of the medical benefit plan coverage year, a public employer, excluding this state, may elect to comply with this section for a medical benefit plan coverage year instead of the requirements in section 3. The designated state official may elect to comply with this section instead of section 3 as to medical benefit plans for state employees and state officers.

(2) For medical benefit plan coverage years beginning on or after January 1, 2012, a public employer shall pay not more than 80% of the total annual costs of all of the medical benefit plans it offers or contributes to for its employees and elected public officials. For purposes of this subsection, total annual costs includes the premium or illustrative rate of the medical benefit plan and all employer payments for reimbursement of co-pays, deductibles, and payments into health savings accounts, flexible spending accounts, or similar accounts used for health care but does not include beneficiary-paid copayments, coinsurance, deductibles,

other out-of-pocket expenses, other service-related fees that are assessed to the coverage beneficiary, or beneficiary payments into health savings accounts, flexible spending accounts, or similar accounts used for health care. For purposes of this section, each elected public official who participates in a medical benefit plan offered by a public employer shall be required to pay 20% or more of the total annual costs of that plan. The public employer may allocate the employees' share of total annual costs of the medical benefit plans among the employees of the public employer as it sees fit.

History: 2011, Act 152, Imd. Eff. Sept. 27, 2011;—Am. 2013, Act 271, Imd. Eff. Dec. 30, 2013.

15.565 Collective bargaining agreement or other contract in effect; inconsistent terms.

Sec. 5. (1) If a collective bargaining agreement or other contract that is inconsistent with sections 3 and 4 is in effect for 1 or more employees of a public employer on September 27, 2011, the requirements of section 3 or 4 do not apply to an employee covered by that contract until the contract expires. A public employer's expenditures for medical benefit plans under a collective bargaining agreement or other contract described in this subsection shall be excluded from calculation of the public employer's maximum payment under section 4. The requirements of sections 3 and 4 apply to any extension or renewal of the contract.

(2) A collective bargaining agreement or other contract that is executed on or after September 27, 2011 shall not include terms that are inconsistent with the requirements of sections 3 and 4.

History: 2011, Act 152, Imd. Eff. Sept. 27, 2011;—Am. 2013, Act 272, Imd. Eff. Dec. 30, 2013.

Compiler's note: Enacting section 1 of Act 272 of 2013 provides:

"Enacting section 1. This amendatory act clarifies the original intent of the legislature that September 27, 2011 is the date on and after which a new contract must comply with this act. This amendatory act is curative and applies retroactively."

15.566 Deduction by public employer.

Sec. 6. A public employer may deduct the covered employee's or elected public official's portion of the cost of a medical benefit plan from compensation due to the covered employee or elected public official. The employer may condition eligibility for the medical benefit plan on the employee's or elected public official's authorizing the public employer to make the deduction.

History: 2011, Act 152, Imd. Eff. Sept. 27, 2011.

15.567 Applicability of requirements to medical benefit plans of public employees and elected public officials; scope; effect of certain sections found to be invalid.

Sec. 7. (1) The requirements of this act apply to medical benefit plans of all public employees and elected public officials to the greatest extent consistent with constitutionally allocated powers, whether or not a public employee is a member of a collective bargaining unit.

(2) If a court finds the requirements of section 3 to be invalid, the expenditure limit in section 4 shall apply to a public employer that does not exempt itself under section 8, except that the requirement for a majority vote of the governing body of the public employer in section 4 shall not apply. If a court finds section 4 to be invalid, the expenditure limit in section 3 shall apply to each public employer that does not exempt itself under section 8.

History: 2011, Act 152, Imd. Eff. Sept. 27, 2011.

15.568 Exemption from act; extension; exceptions.

Sec. 8. (1) By a 2/3 vote of its governing body each year, prior to the beginning of the medical benefit plan coverage year, a local unit of government may exempt itself from the requirements of this act for the next succeeding medical benefit plan coverage year.

(2) A 2/3 vote of the governing body of the local unit of government prior to the beginning of each succeeding medical benefit plan coverage year is required to extend an exemption under this section.

(3) An exemption under this section is not effective for a city with a mayor who is both the chief executive and chief administrator, unless the mayor also approves the exemption.

(4) An exemption under this section is not effective for a county with a county executive who is both the chief executive and chief administrator, unless the county executive also approves the exemption.

(5) An exemption under this section is not effective for a city with a population greater than 600,000.

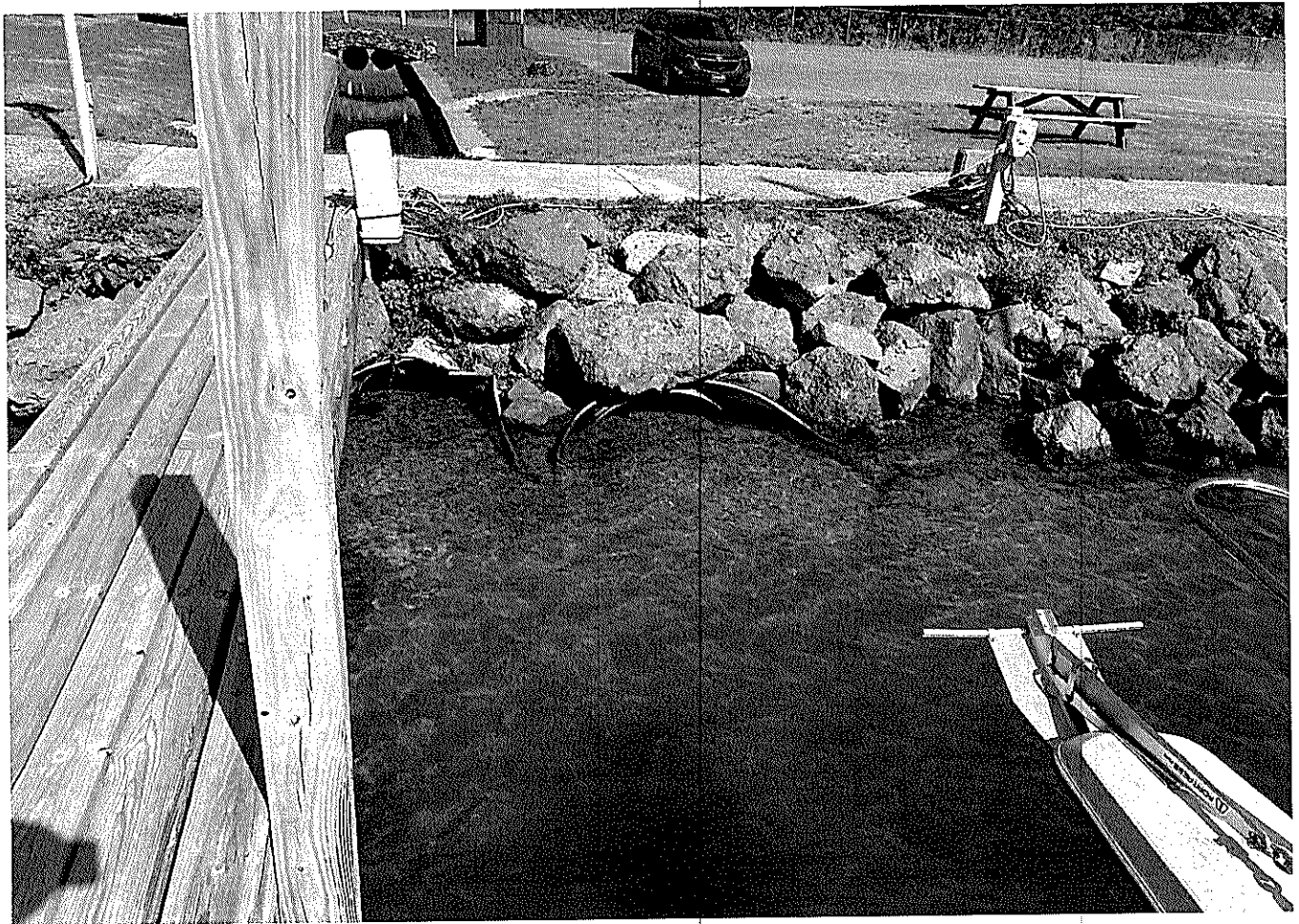
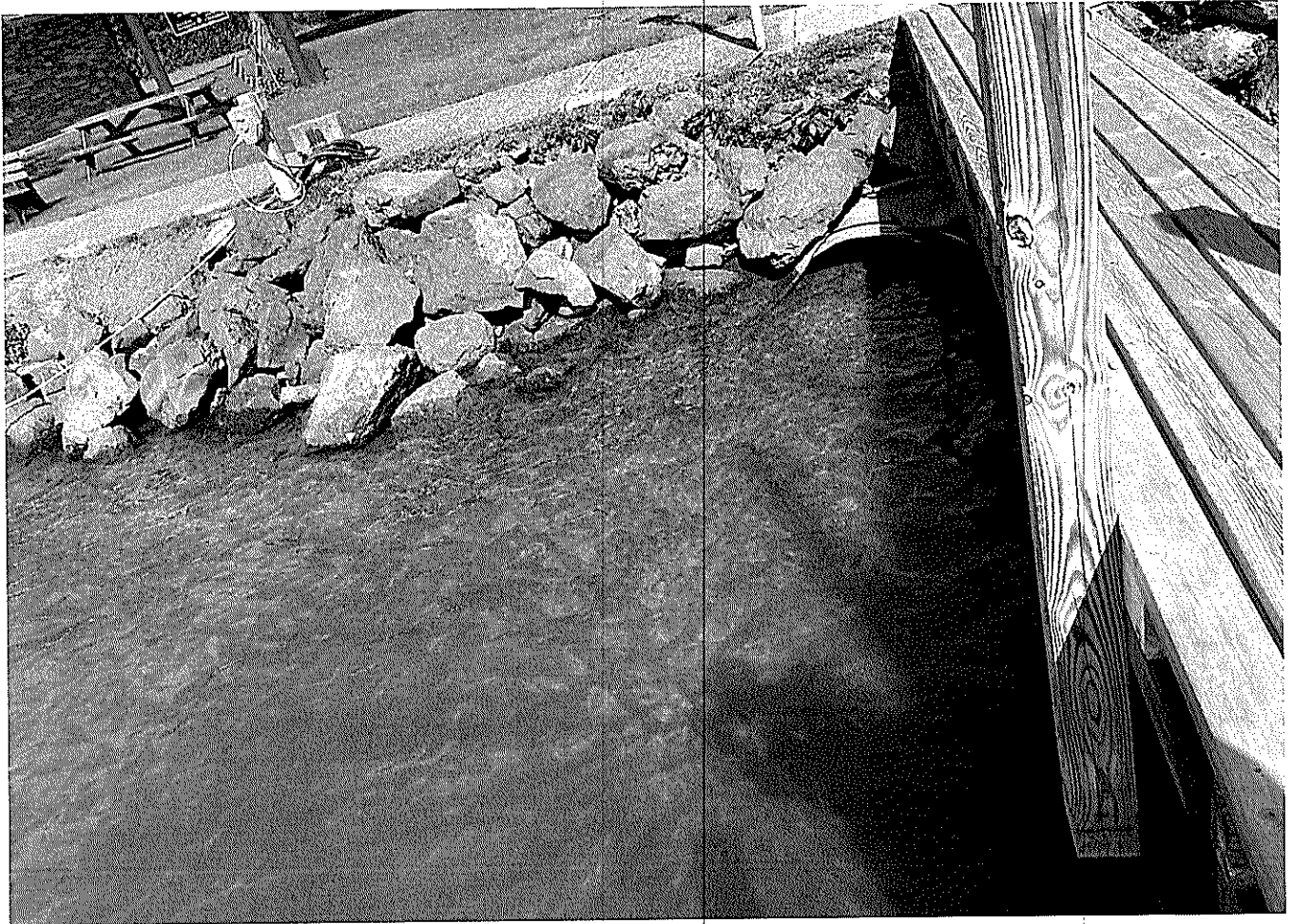
History: 2011, Act 152, Imd. Eff. Sept. 27, 2011;—Am. 2013, Act 273, Imd. Eff. Dec. 30, 2013;—Am. 2014, Act 184, Imd. Eff. June 20, 2014.

15.569 Noncompliance by public employer; penalty.

Sec. 9. If a public employer fails to comply with this act, the public employer shall permit the state treasurer to reduce by 10% each economic vitality incentive program payment received under 2011 PA 63 and the department of education shall assess the public employer a penalty equal to 10% of each payment of

any funds for which the public employer qualifies under the state school aid act of 1979, 1979 PA 94, MCL 388.1601 to 388.1772, during the period that the public employer fails to comply with this act. Any reduction setoff or penalty amounts recovered shall be returned to the fund from which the reduction is assessed or upon which the penalty is determined. The department of education may also refer the penalty collection to the department of treasury for collection consistent with section 13 of 1941 PA 122, MCL 205.13.

History: 2011, Act 152, Imd. Eff. Sept. 27, 2011.





September 14, 2021

Commander Blair Stanifer, 9th District

United States Coast Guard

1240 East 9th Street

Cleveland, OH 44199-2060

Commander Stanifer,

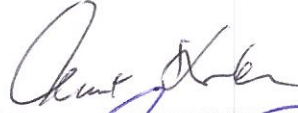
Hello from Houghton County. As you know, we have a scenic and locally revered MDOT Portage Lake Lift Bridge in our Community. This bridge is the one artery to the North, and it connects the two cities of Houghton and Hancock in what has become an ever increasing crossing. A large concern for our residents, visitors, and members of the Emergency Services teams (Fire, Police, EMS) happens each time that a lift is made during our busiest of drivetimes. We all understand that the Federal Waterway is protected, and that for commercial vessels that the bridge will be lifted at any time one is needed. Currently, this same protection is granted to the pleasure crafts and non-commercial vessels, and we would like to ask you to help us by considering a restriction for lifts for these vessels during the highest commute times and when the traffic on the roads is heaviest. These lifts have big impacts for the morning and evening commutes, and they also cause great concern to our citizens.

We have been working with many of our local organizations, the two cities, and MDOT to come up with solutions. If it would be possible to restrict the lifts for pleasure crafts during the 7:00 and 8:00 am hours, and again at the 4:00 and 5:00 pm hours, that would really help to limit the impact of the lifts. Getting an ambulance to the front of the bridge lines to address an emergency can be quite a challenge, and for the State Police and other members of our Law Enforcement it is the same problem when we have an emergency at 430 pm and the bridge is up for a sailboat. We have noted the CFR that has been instituted for the community of Charlevoix (see attached), and that this is helping them with the same concerns on their bridge. We would like to ask you for the same here.

This issue has been talked about here in our community and county for a long time. The traffic on our roads under the pandemic is like never before, and as more tourists join our citizens on the four ramps onto the bridge each day, the backups and resulting traffic jams have really become a problem when lifts happen. We ask for you to carefully consider this matter, and to then to consider placing times of restricted lifts of the bridge to coincide with our busiest of drivetimes. Thank you.

HOUGHTON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

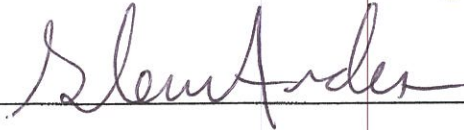
Albert Koskela, Chair



Tom Tikkanen, Vice Chair



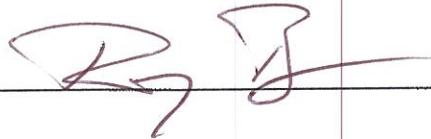
Glenn Anderson



Gretchen Janssen



Roy Britz





Houghton County

OFFICE OF THE SHERIFF



403 E. Houghton Ave • Houghton, Michigan 49931
Phone: (906) 482-0055 • Fax: (906) 487-5949

• mail: sheriff@houghtonsheriff.com
• website: www.houghtonsheriff.com

Kevin L. Coppo
Sheriff
(906) 482-0055

Mr. Blair Stanifer
Commander, Ninth Coast Guard District.
1240 East 9th Street
Cleveland, OH 44199-2060

I am writing you in support of the counties concerns of the raising of the Portage Lake Lift Bridge for pleasure craft. My concern is that the raising of the bridge for pleasure crafts in the morning and evening, during heavy commuter traffic, is a great concern for public safety.

During the morning and evening hours when the bridge sees the highest number of commuters this backs traffic up on some days over a mile or more. Numerous times over my 25 year career in Houghton County, Ambulances and Police cars have been stuck on either side of the Canal.

I would ask that you re-consider our request for modification of the times the bridge can be raised for pleasure craft.

Respectfully,

Kevin Coppo, Sheriff
Houghton County Sheriff Office
403 E. Houghton Ave. Houghton, MI, 49931
906-482-0055
kcoppo@houghtonsheriff.com



STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF STATE POLICE
Calumet Post

GRETCHEN WHITMER
GOVERNOR

COL. JOSEPH M. GASPER
DIRECTOR

October 1, 2021

Mr. Blaire Stanifer
Commander, Ninth Coast Guard District
1240 East 9th Street
Cleveland, OH 44199-2060

Dear Commander Stanifer,

I am writing this letter in support for modification to the raising of the Portage Lake Lift Bridge for pleasure craft. Of particular concern is the raising of the bridge during peak traffic times which is the morning and evening business commutes.

On numerous occasions I have personally been with the backup of traffic as a direct result of the bridge being lifted. Although this is tolerable for times of the day when there is minimal traffic it is not during the peak traffic times of the day. The north and south side of the bridge can be backed up as far as 2 miles causing a 45-to-60-minute wait.

This type of condensed traffic not only effects the traffic involved with crossing the Portage Lake Lift Bridge but the surrounding schools, neighborhoods, and businesses as well. People start to seek alternate routes in an attempt to expedite their commute. This results in high volumes of traffic traveling on roads and in neighborhoods that were not meant for this volume of traffic. I have personally witnessed vehicle's driving on the sidewalk, ATV trail and through business lots to gain an advantage over other vehicles.

This has had a great effect on law enforcement and being able to respond to significant incidents in a timely manner due to congestion. Even in a situation where emergency lights and sirens can be utilized there is nowhere for traffic to go causing a delayed response. Our EMS personal have also experienced the same type of frustration. It is only a matter of time before someone loses a life due to the inability to respond.

On behalf of the community and the citizen's we serve, I ask that you seriously consider our request for modification to the procedures for raising the bridge for pleasure craft to pass during peak times.

Thank you for your time and consideration,



Sgt. Jeremy Cleary
Acting Post Commander
Michigan State Police-Calumet Post



CITY OF HOUGHTON

POLICE DEPARTMENT

616 Sheldon Avenue, P.O. Box 606

Houghton, Michigan 49931

Phone: (906) 482-2121

Fax: 906-482-0353

email: policedepartment@cityofhoughton.com

August 16, 2021

Mr. Blair Stanifer
Commander, Ninth Coast Guard District
1240 East 9th Street
Cleveland, OH 44199

Dear Commander Stanifer,

I write to express our concern of the public safety risk that the Portage Lift Bridge causes for local emergency responders. The Portage Lift Bridge connects the cities of Houghton and Hancock and is the only access point to the Keweenaw Peninsula which is home to over 20 thousand residents. As this is the only way to connect the two communities, the Portage Lift bridge is a natural congestion point for traffic.

The local law enforcement agencies and fire departments have mutual aid agreements which require emergency vehicles to cross the Portage Lake Lift Bridge for emergency services. The only two hospitals within a 50-mile radius are on the north side of the Portage Lift Bridge. All patients on the south side of the bridge are at the mercy of being able to cross the Portage Lift Bridge in a timely manner to receive emergency medical services.

With over 2500 cars crossing the Portage Lake Lift Bridge per hour at peak times, any kind of disruption cannot only cause a delay in traffic crossing the bridge but also a delay in getting traffic flowing after the disruption. A 10-minute closure for one pleasure craft will delay traffic for thousands of vehicles for up to 45 minutes. These disruptions can paralyze not only your typical motorists but also emergency services.

Any and all restrictions placed on pleasure crafts that could reduce the amount of bridge closures for vehicle traffic would be strongly supported by the Houghton Police Department and all first responders in the area.

I ask that you seriously consider making modifications to the procedures for raising the bridge for pleasure crafts to pass.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Donnelly".

John Donnelly
Chief of Police

October 8, 2021

Commander Blair Stanifer, 9th District USCG

1240 East 9th Street

Cleveland, OH 44199-2060

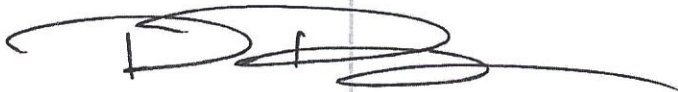
Commander Stanifer,

As the leader for the only Ambulance Service in the area, I can tell you that this issue is an important one for me and my team. We respond to emergencies on both sides of the bridge every day, and when the traffic is backed up for miles on all four of the on ramps it is very difficult to get our vehicles and the patients to the front of the logjams.

We deal in life and death situations, and at important times minutes and even seconds can count and lives really are on the line. In those moments of high stress, my team members and I need to deliver our patients to the hospitals as quickly as possible. A delay at any part of the day is real, and I know that it will never be perfect and that delays are going to happen with this crossing no matter what. If we can limit the busiest of times during the day for lifts, I can promise you that our community and its citizens are going to be safer as we do our work with them and respond to their calls.

Thank you for considering this change, and know that if lifts can be restricted for pleasure crafts just how impactful it will be for me and my team, and for all citizens and visitors to our area.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Patrick Boberg', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Patrick Boberg, CEO, Mercy EMS, Inc.

BOARD OF
County Road Commissioners
HOUGHTON COUNTY

WILLIAM H. SILER, Chairman
Torch Lake Township
Gene Londo, Vice Chairman
Calumet Township
Pete Torola, Member
Chassell Township

20140 Gagnon Circle, M-26, Ripley
P.O. Box 269
Hancock, MI 49930
Office • 1-906-482-3600
Fax • 1-906-482-9600
Web • www.houghtoncountyroads.org

KEVIN P. HARJU, P.E.
County Highway Engineer
Robert Tarvis, Jr.
Office Manager

September 14, 2021

Commander Blair Stanifer, 9th District
United States Coast Guard
1240 East 9th Street
Cleveland, OH 44199-2060

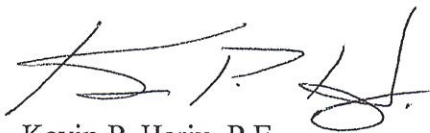
Dear Commander Stanifer,

This is in reference to the possibility of modifying the rules/times for raising the Portage Lake Lift Bridge for pleasure craft. The annual average daily travel (AADT) on the bridge is 17,413 vehicles (per MDOT). During the summer months the AADT is even higher. Traffic is very congested during the morning and evening commutes and interruptions during those times cause long delays for both commuters and emergency vehicles of up to 50 minutes.

It is for these reasons that we would like to request that during the morning and evening commute times that the bridge lifts be restricted for pleasure crafts.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me at my office 906-482-3600.

Very truly yours,
BOARD OF COUNTY ROAD COMMISSIONERS



Kevin P. Harju, P.E.

County Highway Engineer/Manager



CITY OF HOUGHTON

BIRTHPLACE OF PROFESSIONAL HOCKEY

City Center

616 Sheldon Avenue • P.O. Box 606
Houghton, Michigan 49931
(906) 482-1700
www.cityofhoughton.com

16 August 2021

Mr. Blair Stanifer
Commander, Ninth Coast Guard District
1240 East 9th Street
Cleveland, OH 44199

Dear Commander Stanifer,

This letter is written in support of our local effort in proposing changes to the regulations governing the lifting of the Portage Lake Lift Bridge for pleasure craft during certain times of the day. I'm sure you have been made aware of our geography and the lift bridge's importance as the lone route to cross between the Keweenaw Peninsula and the mainland – and that both of our local hospitals and EMS responders are located on the north side on the peninsula.

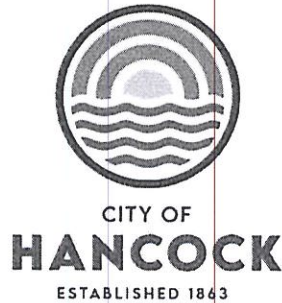
The Portage Canal was an important shipping commerce route for much of the 19th and 20th centuries, which is presumably the reason for the requirement for a bridge lift on all maritime traffic. However, the vast majority of maritime traffic is now pleasure boats, particularly private sailboats, with many of those sailboats requiring a bridge lift. It is that lift for those pleasure craft and the ensuing traffic disruption of thousands of vehicles that, at certain times of the day, can take nearly an hour to clear. During the lift and for some time afterward the traffic back-ups prevent emergency traffic from moving, let alone crossing the bridge to get to the hospital or an emergency scene. Beyond our critical first responder traffic needs you have the thousands of motorists who are going to be late for something like work, a medical appointment, or picking up a child from school; plus the net effect of those thousands of cars idling, but going nowhere, for an extended period.

Given the very small amount of commercial and emergency marine traffic we see today, I don't believe anyone would disagree that those lifts could occur at any time of the day; and no one is asking for any modifications involving such traffic.

We trust that the logical, common sense request made regarding pleasure boats during certain hours of the day will be further considered and look forward to the ability for USCG to obtain public comment on a proposed change.

Very truly yours,

Eric T. Waara, P.E.
City Manager



September 29, 2021

Mr. Blair Stanifer
Commander, Ninth Coast Guard District
1240 East 9th Street
Cleveland, OH 44199

RE: PORTAGE LAKE LIFT BRIDGE

Commander Stanifer,

This letter is meant to show full support of our local effort to propose changes to the regulations that govern the lifting of the Portage Lake Lift Bridge for pleasure craft at certain times of day. As you know the lift bridge is the only route to cross between the Keweenaw Peninsula and the mainland.


There is a long history of the Portage Canal being used as a commerce route. At this point in time the majority of traffic on the Portage Canal is now for pleasure boats, many of which are sailboats that require a bridge lift. When a bridge lift is needed for a sailboat or any pleasure craft it disrupts traffic for thousands of vehicles at certain times of day. The vehicle traffic can take up to an hour to clear.

During the bridge lifts it makes it impossible for emergency vehicles to cross the bridge and get to the hospital. This is one of the main concerns but there is also the motorist that will be late for work, school or appts. There is also an impact to public transportation in the area when disabled residents aren't able to get timely rides due to the bridge lifts.

I am not advocating to change the traffic for commercial or emergency marine traffic this is also important to our area. But consideration for the changes to the regulations for pleasure craft to certain hours of the day would be greatly appreciated.

We would appreciate your consideration and look forward to the ability for the USCG to obtain public comment on a proposed change.

Respectfully,


Mary Babcock
City Manager

...is UPward™



KEWEENAW ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ALLIANCE
Leading Economic Development in the Keweenaw

September 20, 2021

Blair Stanifer, Commander
United States Coast Guard 9th District
1240 East 9th Street
Cleveland, OH 44199-2060

RE: Portage Lift Bridge

Dear Commander Stanifer:


On behalf of the Keweenaw Economic Development Alliance (KEDA) Board of Directors, I am writing in support of the Houghton County Board of Commissioners (HCBOC) request to set defined times when the Portage Lift Bridge will not be opened to pleasure craft and non-commercial vessels transiting the Portage waterway.

KEDA is a non-profit, public-private local economic development organization that works to start, grow, retain, and attract business to the Keweenaw, identify and package funding for needed infrastructure, revitalize our communities, support the attraction and retention of talent and assist in the improvement of our cultural and recreation infrastructure. As such we view the current situation that allows a single pleasure craft to disrupt the flow of traffic during peak commuting times as a detriment to the safe effective functioning of our economy and community.

We respectfully ask you to take the steps necessary to establish set times as requested by the HCBOC for the morning and evening commute when the bridge will not be opened to a passing pleasure craft or non-commercial vessel. Because this bridge is the only crossing of the waterway, all commerce and people have to use it to get to businesses and jobs and all emergency services have to use it to respond to accidents, disasters and to access both hospitals. When traffic backs up during a peak hour opening, the highway system is gridlocked for a significant amount of time. When the system gridlocks, emergency vehicles cannot move through it to even approach the bridge.

We appreciate your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Jeff Hatcliff
Executive Director

Cc: KEDA Board of Directors



**Michigan
Technological
University**

Public Safety and Police Services

August 16, 2021

Mr. Blair Stanifer
Commander, Ninth Coast Guard District
1240 East 9th Street
Cleveland, OH 44199-2060

Dear Commander Stanifer,

I write to express my strong support for modification to the raising of the Portage Lake Lift Bridge for pleasure craft. Of particular concern is the raising of the bridge during the morning and evening business commutes. My request is rooted in a deep concern for public safety.

During those times when the bridge is raised for a pleasure craft to pass underneath, traffic will back up for long periods of time. I have personally been in a line of traffic that extended 1.5 miles from the bridge. As a result of the slow pace of traffic resuming motion after the bridge was lowered back into position, it took me 52 minutes to reach the bridge.

This is unacceptable for everyday commuters. It is even worse for emergency vehicles that may need to cross the bridge during those times. While they can activate emergency lights to gain some advantage, the resulting delays can easily result in very serious and tragic consequences for those in need of assistance.

I ask that you seriously consider our request for modification to the procedures for raising the bridge for pleasure craft to pass.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Respectfully,

Brian Cadwell
Director and Chief of Police



September 1, 2021

Mr. Blaire Stanifer
Commander, Ninth Coast Guard District
1240 East 9th Street
Cleveland, OH 44199-2060

Dear Commander Stanifer,

I would also like to express my strong support for modification to the raising of the Portage Lake Lift Bridge for pleasure craft. Of particular concern is the raising of the bridge during the morning and evening business commutes.

Our greatest concerns are:

- The safe passage of emergency vehicles that need to cross the bridge during times of long waits
- We have on call staff needing to cross the bridge with urgency. Health Care providers are needed in our building within 30 minutes of time to deliver urgent health care needs and live on both sides of the bridge
- Daily work routines of our employees

On behalf of our community hospital, I ask that you seriously consider our request for modification to the procedures for raising the bridge for pleasure craft to pass.

Thank you for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Glenn Patrick', written over a white background.

Glenn Patrick
Facilities Director



ASPIRUS KEWEENAW HOSPITAL

205 Osceola Street, Laurium, MI 49913
P 906.337.6500 | aspirus.org

Mr. Blair Stanifer
Commander, Ninth Coast Guard District
1240 East 9th Street
Cleveland, OH 44199-2060

Subject: Portage Lake Lift Bridge

Dear Commander Stanifer,

I write to you today as a community leader in support of modifying the current practices regarding the raising of the Portage Lake Lift Bridge. My main concern is rooted in the health and safety of the local community.

When the bridge is raised for pleasure craft to pass underneath during the morning and evening commute traffic frequently gets backed up for extended periods. By the time the bridge gets lowered and traffic resumes, area residents heading to and from work and school can face delays of an hour or more.

This process is concerning for emergency vehicles, first responders and medical professionals that need to cross the bridge during those times. Currently both health care systems based in the area are located on the north side of the bridge with the nearest medical facility located almost an hour to the south. While emergency lights have some advantage, the resulting delays can easily cause serious or tragic consequences for those needing medical care.

At Aspirus Health, our number one priority is protecting the safety of our patients, employees, and communities. I ask that you consider our request for modifying your procedures for raising the Portage Lake Lift Bridge.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

In Health,

Matt Krause
Chief Administrative Officer