

**HOUGHTON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING
MARCH 9, 2021**

The Houghton County Board of Commissioners held a Regular meeting on Tuesday, March 9, 2021, in the 5th Floor Conference room of the Courthouse, City of Houghton. The public was attending by Zoom.

Call to Order:

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

Pledge of Allegiance:

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Chairman Koskela.

Roll call:

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

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, seconded by Commissioner Britz to approve the January 22, 2021 and the February 9, 2021 minutes as presented.

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

Approval of Agenda/Additions:

Commissioner Tikkanen requested two (2) additions. #6a-Discussion to reopen the courthouse, and #6b-Questions about the UPSET agents at the Café Rosetta.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Tikkanen, seconded by Commissioner Britz to approve the Agenda with the two (2) additions as presented.

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

Public Comments:

None.

Approval of Bills:

A Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson and seconded by Commissioner Janssen to approve paying the bills submitted of \$1,278,769.03 as presented.

The Motion carried by the following vote.

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

NO: None 0.

Correspondence:

None.

Reports:

1. Standing committee

Commissioner Britz reported to the Board on the following:

Houghton County Road Commission: This year the snow fall total through January is 115.3” compared to last year’s total of 194.8”. Ray Saatio, Supervisor, will be retiring in July 2021. Six (6) applicants applied for the job. Keith Jenich Jr. was appointed as the new Supervisor and will begin in July 2021.

Commissioner Tikkanen had nothing to report to the Board.

Commissioner Anderson reported to the Board on the following:

Houghton County Fair: The Houghton County Fair Association hopes the County Fair will be held in August. The Association applied for a \$75,000 Department of Agriculture Grant that they would have to match. The Association hopes to put a cement floor in the Exhibit Building. This is a \$100,000 project. The Association nets about \$10,000 on a good year on what they make on a fair. The Board will have to borrow money to do this project. The Association has lost rental revenue and hourly rental ice billing due to COVID.

Census: Glenn discussed the certificate all board members and the County Clerk received. The County has spent approximately \$18,000. The Census numbers will not be done until September 30, 2021. He believes the numbers in Houghton County will be down approximately 5,000-7,000 due to snowbirds and students.

Western UP Health Department: As of March 8th, there is a 64.18 coverage for the vaccine, and 38.5 of residents have had their second dose. Houghton County is the leading area, and the County is exceeding all other counties by 6%. There are three (3) entities working in the County: Western UP Health Department, Aspirus and Portage Health System. He gave kudos to the Health Department, Aspirus and Portage Health.

Glenn discussed the 1.9 Trillion Stimulus Bill. The municipalities in Houghton County are estimated to get \$14 million. \$7.25 million being given to Protection Program, and \$25 Billion to bars, restaurants and theaters.

The 1st direct marijuana benefit payment of \$28,000 was received from the one company (1) licensed in Houghton.

Commissioner Janssen reported to the Board on the following:

UP Resource Conservation and Development Council: Recently submitted three (3) proposals for three (3) new funding sources, and two (2) will benefit Houghton County. Keweenaw Invasive Species Management received a \$150,000 grant.

Houghton Keweenaw Conservation District: They will be having a modified tree sale in late April or early May. People can pre-order 3/9-4/15 early on HKconserve.com. People will receive a call to pick up.

Chairman Koskela reported to the Board on the following:

Veterans Affairs Office: He brought a letter to the Veteran’s Office that he received where an individual praised the workers at the Veterans Office.

2. Special Committee

None.

3. County Officers

None.

New Business:

1. Michigan Association of Counties Guest Presentation from Executive Director Steve Currie

Steve Currie gave a lengthy presentation to the Board and participated by Zoom. He is hoping to visit Houghton County in October 2021. He discussed various legislative bills and issues including the change of the Board of Commissioner terms from 2 to 4 years. County has 3 years to use funds. Regarding Trial Court and Court funding, they are recommending everyone create a State funding management system. Establish a tourism excess tax. He discussed exempt tax districts and special millages, tax exempt and property tax. Cost based approach for properties built more than 7 years ago. The Veteran Services are fully funded, and the County is to maintain the level of funding and have 1 year and they are looking into relief under HB4122. Mental Health is a priority.

According to the Open Meeting Act-virtual meetings can be held until March 31, 2021.

There will be an Educational Services Conference-virtual this spring on April 28-29, and a Summer conference-in person on September 26-28.

He stated the County should get the first stimulus check in 60 days and the second check within a year.

2. Jail Discussion and Proposal Karin Cooper from UPEA

Commissioner Britz stated a new parcel was available on Sharon Avenue.

Karin Cooper, UPEA Engineer, stated the group had previously looked at 3-4 sites. This new parcel is the Apostolic Church on Sharon Avenue. It has a commercial kitchen, and a jail could be built behind the building. A great benefit is the land is level, and has parking in the front and the back with possibilities of expansion in the back of the lot. There are about 6 acres on this parcel.

Commissioner Anderson asked for a Board work session with Karin in 1-2 weeks. He suggested finding out the occupancy of the jail and work camp and to see if there is a trend to criminal offenses.

Chairman Koskela asked the County Clerk when the deadline for the August Election is. She stated May 11th by 4:30 pm to her.

Commissioner Britz stated he believed the cost of this parcel is \$1.1 million.

Commissioner Anderson suggested finding out the history of the parcel for the last three (3) years of occupancy. He suggested to get current information on the jail and work camp from the Sheriff and the Captain and have them attend the tour and work session.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Britz and seconded by Commissioner Janssen to continue working with UPEA and approve the UPEA Proposal for \$3,000-\$5,000 as presented.

The Motion carried by the following vote.

YES: Britz, Janssen, Koskela, Anderson 4.

NO: Tikkanen 1.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson and seconded by Commissioner Britz to meet on March 18, 2021 at 1:00 pm to tour the parcel on Sharon Avenue. The public is

invited to attend. Following the tour, the Board, Sheriff, Captain and Karin Cooper will have a work session/Special meeting at the courthouse at 1:30 pm.

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

Commissioner Tikkanen said he thinks the asking price should be looked into before touring the property.

3. Old Transfer Station Sale, Opening of Sealed Bids

Chairman Koskela opened the two (2) sealed bids. The first bid was from the City of Houghton for \$32,501.00. The second bid was from Great American Environmental Services for \$55,000.00.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson and seconded by Commissioner Tikkanen to accept the high bid of \$55,000.00 bid as presented.

The Motion carried by the following vote.

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

NO: None 0.

The Board gave Ben Larson, Administrator, the authority to proceed to arrange for the closing and document preparation with M&M Title.

4. USDA Compliance Review and Monthly Tonnage for Current Transfer Station

Ben Larson, Administrator, stated according to the USDA, the Transfer Station is in compliance. He praised the workers at the Transfer Station.

Commissioner Tikkanen asked when credit/debit cards will be able to be used at the Transfer Station. Ben Larson stated soon. He stated the Transfer Station is in need of a new cash register. The scale also may need to be updated.

5. Dominion Voting Machines Discussion

Commissioner Tikkanen discussed concerns he has received regarding national and media reporting. He has no concern about the Houghton County elections, or the Houghton County Clerk, or the cities and township clerk's performances. He said the Clerks and staff are doing a great job.

County Clerk, Jennifer Kelly, had given the Board a packet prior to the beginning of the meeting. The Board discussed having time to review it.

Commissioner Tikkanen mentioned the Homeland Security updates and requested the Board looking into an independent third party to investigate the possibility of Houghton Counties results being hacked/breached shortly after the November election on November 6, 2020. He asked if Houghton County has the authority to audit the county election machines and is Houghton County required to use the machines. County Clerk Kelly responded that it is in Michigan Election Law.

Commissioner Anderson stated he does receive emails. He discussed Mike Lindell, the Pillow man, and provided a handout to the Board. He stated this handout shows the "intrusion". Dominion has filed a lawsuit against Lindell. The Trump campaign did not use Lindell's report. He discussed the human error in Antrim County. He stated Trump won in Houghton County in 2020 by 2,628 votes. He said there would have to be a conspiracy done by a city/township clerk. Commissioner Tikkanen said people do not trust the Dominion voting machines.

County Clerk, Jennifer Kelly, informed the Board and the public that the election computer has zero (0) internet. It is never connected. The Commissioners and public were invited to come to see the Clerk's election computer at any time. She also stated the

tabulators throughout the Houghton County precincts are permanently sealed where there could be access to the internet.

Commissioner Anderson had discussion back and forth with Commissioner Tikkanen. Commissioner Tikkanen said the votes were not effected in Houghton County. The concerns are that Houghton County was breeched by some means. He requested time to review the packet he received from County Clerk Kelly. Commissioner Anderson requested which clerk would be investigated. Commissioner Tikkanen said the third party could track down the 1 trail that exists for the intrusion. Commissioner Anderson said you have to accuse someone in order to investigate and there must be an allegation before an investigation can begin. Commissioner Janssen said she doesn't know how anyone could investigate the intrusion. Commissioner Tikkanen said voters have concerns regarding the system and the mailing of absentee ballots.

Commissioner Janssen said she finds none of the information given today to be credible. Commissioner Tikkanen said he is surprised no one is willing to investigate this. Commissioner Anderson said Commissioner Tikkanen wanting the investigation means he is accusing someone. Commissioner Janssen said she has received enough of an explanation. Commissioner Anderson suggested Commissioner Tikkanen go to his township clerk to view the voting equipment used there.

6. Resolution to Join Michigan Liquid Asset Fund Plus. Lisa Mattila, Treasurer

Lisa Mattila, County Treasurer, commented on J -#4 on the Agenda and asked that she be included in the cash register and credit card machine purchase/discussion.

Lisa Mattila explained she was working with Thomas Armstrong to join the Fund. She requested the Board approve a Resolution so she can join this fund. It would be a higher rate of return.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Tikkanen and seconded by Commissioner Anderson to adopt the Resolution to Join the Michigan Liquid Asset Fund Plus as presented.

The Motion carried by the following vote.

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

NO: None 0.

**HOUGHTON COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

401 E. Houghton Avenue, Houghton, Michigan 49931

Telephone: (906)482-8307 Fax: (906)482-7238



Chairperson
Albert Koskela
Vice Chairperson
Thomas Tikkanen

Commissioners
Glenn Anderson
Gretchen Janssen
Roy Britz

**RESOLUTION #21-03
RESOLUTION TO JOIN THE
MICHIGAN LIQUID ASSET FUND PLUS
COUNTY OF HOUGHTON**

by the Local Unit.

- 3. The following offices and officials of the Local Unit and their respective successors in office each are hereby designated as “Authorized Officials” with full power and authority to effectuate the investment and withdrawal of monies of the Local Unit from time to time in accordance with the Declaration of Trust.

***RESOLUTION TO JOIN THE
MICHIGAN LIQUID ASSET FUND PLUS
COUNTY OF HOUGHTON***

Printed Name Date	County Treasurer	Signature
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Printed Name Date	Deputy Treasurer	Signature
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Motion moved by: Tikkanen

Motion supported by: Anderson

Roll Call Vote: Yes: Tikkanen, Anderson, Koskela, Janssen, Britz 5.
 No: None 0.

Motion carried.

Albert Koskela, Chairperson Houghton County Board of Commissioners	<u>March 9, 2021</u> Date
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6-a. Reopening the courthouse

Commissioner Tikkanen discussed the reopening of the Houghton County courthouse. The Administrator stated some courthouses are open and some will not open for a long time. Delta County is open.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson, seconded by Commissioner Tikkanen to reopen the Houghton County Courthouse on March 17, 2021. County Board meetings will continue to have Zoom. Ben Larson stated the County will follow the leadership of the Health Department.

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

6-b. UPSET Agents in Café Rosetta

Commissioner Tikkanen stated there are 4 UPSET teams in the UP and stated UPSET is successful in taking down drug houses. He discussed 2 officers from the Escanaba Police Post were dispatched to Café Rosetta.

Sheriff McLean addressed the board and explained what he had been told about the 2 officers being dispatched to Café Rosetta. Commissioner Tikkanen asked who ordered the 2 UPSET team members to the Café Rosetta? Sheriff McLean said a new Captain made that decision, and it was a bad decision and will not happen again, and would use someone from the regular division. The Delta County Sheriff was upset. They were sent to Café Rosetta because of their expertise in surveillance equipment. Sheriff McLean felt the request came from downstate and the explanation was not given to him.

Commissioner Anderson stated they should not have used the UPSET team for this matter. He also commented that Café Rosetta made their own decisions, and back in January Chairman Koskela calling the Health Department staff the “gestapo agents” and possibly the MSP.

Chairman Koskela commented and he said the MSP does not have any business investigating any businesses in Houghton County. He believes Lansing had something to do with this, and used the taxpayer’s money to do so.

Commissioner Tikkanen stated the Café Rosetta situation should be dealt with the Judge and the Health Department, but felt this UPSET matter caused damage to the local UPSET team.

7. Travel Requests

a. Jennifer Kelly-County Clerk Meeting in Marquette

Chairman Koskela stated there is no travel. County Clerk, Jennifer Kelly, asked to explain why she submitted a travel expense. Jennifer explained that once every 10 years, the Apportionment Commission is to meet once the Census numbers comes in, and put the Commissioners in Districts. There are five (5) new members on this Commission. There will be a presentation in Marquette regarding this process. Also, the election vendors will be in attendance, and someone from the CPL Unit.

Chairman Koskela asked why she could not use the County car. Jennifer explained she has a prefers driving her own vehicle, and the Board is approving other elected officials for mileage reimbursement and she did not receive one cent for performing the mandatory 14 audits following the November election.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson, seconded by Commissioner Tikkanen to approve Jennifer Kelly’s travel request as presented.

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

8. Appropriations:

1. CC Mental Health Monthly \$13,707.91
2. WUPPDR Quarterly \$2,866.50
3. UP Resource Conservation and Development Council \$350

A Motion was made by Commissioner Tikkanen and seconded by Commissioner Janssen to approve the above-mentioned Appropriations as presented.

The Motion carried by the following vote.

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

NO: None 0.

Public Comments:

Linda Belote addressed the Board.

Neil Anderson addressed the Board.

Patrick Colbeck addressed the Board.

Announcements:

None.

Adjournment:

A Motion was made by Commissioner Britz and seconded by Commissioner Anderson to adjourn at 7:02 pm.

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

Albert Koskela, Chairman

Jennifer Kelly, County Clerk