

**HOUGHTON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
MARCH 11, 2019**

The Houghton County Board of Commissioners held a Committee of the Whole meeting on Monday, March 11, 2019, in the 5th Floor Conference Room of the Courthouse, City of Houghton.

Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Albert Koskela at 2:00 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance:

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Chairman Koskela.

Roll call:

The following commissioners responded to roll call:

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

Approval of Agenda/Additions:

A Motion was made by Commissioner Tikkanen, seconded by Commissioner Janssen to approve the Agenda as presented.

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

Public Comments:

Roger Sullivan addressed the Board regarding a personal Circuit Court lawsuit between himself and John Pekkala.

New Business:

1. Houghton County Jail

Chairman Koskela opened discussion to the Commissioners regarding the Jail.

Commissioner Tikkanen discussed feedback from constituents. They requested holding public events, and a process set by the County to keep the public involved, and discussed Camp Kitwen.

Commissioner Britz discussed local participation and the jail plans in 2010 and discussed a possibility of a multi-county jail facility, and the Sheriff's Office must be within the City of Houghton, the jail does not. He stated Camp Kitwen has been vacant for approximately 10 years, no security or locking mechanisms and only has a fence. He stated the Board should exhaust efforts to look into Camp Kitwen. He also advised that video arraignments are an option, however, an inmate has a right to appear in person before the Judge. Commissioner Tikkanen addressed the operating cost and staffing costs to transport inmates. Chairman Koskela advised that in 2010, Camp Kitwen cost approximately \$486,000 annually in operating expenses and \$96,000 in utilities.

Chairman Koskela advised that a letter from August 2018 stating that Camp Kitwen was not safe to tour due to deterioration.

Commissioner Tikkanen discussed the proposal failing by 162 votes in 2018. He discussed involving the community more and discussed the option of a new complex.

Chairman Koskela advised that the experts gave the options that went on the ballot in 2018, not the Commissioners.

Commissioner Britz applauded the Board for the 2018 Proposal, but said that proposal did not look at future expansions. He commented on how an engineer back in 2009 said our jail is a third world facility. He stated the jail should be safe, future minded, secure for the inmates and staff, and should be affordable. He questioned if the City of Houghton would guarantee roads (Dodge, Huron or South Avenue) for future expansions, and the City stated there would be no guarantees as they do not know who will be on committees at that time.

Chairman Koskela discussed how the 2018 Proposal included the moving of the Work camp to the current jail.

Commissioner Janssen discussed the future plans for the courthouse and jail, the cost and operating costs, location, and having options for the voters.

Commissioner Anderson stated that in 2016 the state legislature passed a bill for Camp Kitwen to be sold. He stated an architect and a group of people could go and visit the facility. He discussed the board having options and to get some reasonable costs estimates for the following:

1. A new complex-City of Houghton.
2. Camp Kitwen-get cost estimates.
3. The \$11 million jail addition

Commissioner Tikkanen discussed the Committee back in 2010 that had approximately 25 people.

Chairman Koskela discussed how the Sheriff Department has been recently remodeled.

Commissioner Tikkanen discussed getting cost estimates from Karin Cooper, and to ask volunteers to look at the pros and cons, and then use them to market the decision.

The Board discussed the following options:

1. A separate jail facility
2. Camp Kitwen-spring tour
3. Entire new County complex

The Board recommends a Task Force Committee be established involving 1-2 people from each of the 14 townships, MTA, League of Women Voters, 3 Houghton County Sheriff Department, Michigan State Police, 1 from each village, entire Board of Commissioners, the Cities of Hancock and Houghton, Chamber of Commerce/KEDA, and Copper Country Mental Health to look into the above-mentioned options.

Eric Forsberg will send out letters to everyone asking for names of people appointed to the Task Force Committee.

The Task Force Committee should meet monthly and shall elect a Chair and Vice Chair.

The Board also recommended getting construction costs and construction comps for operating and renovating Camp Kitwen, a new jail facility with an option for District Court, and a new full complex.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson, seconded by Commissioner Janssen to have their recommendation be on the May 12th Agenda for Board of Commissioners meeting.

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

Public Comments:

Horst Schmitt addressed the Board regarding the cost of transporting inmates.

Bill Fink addressed the Board as he was on the 2010 Task Force Committee, and stated why Camp Kitwen will not work. He recommended the Board respond to the City of Houghton regarding holding onto the land the City has offered to the County for an entire new jail and courthouse complex, and to involve the Houghton County Planning Commission with the new task force.

Commissioner Tikkanen stated the current courthouse is safe and has yearly maintenance.

Anne Newcombe addressed the Board regarding the conditions of the jail and the aging courthouse and mentioned Shopko being vacant.

Horst Schmitt addressed the Board regarding the safety of the courthouse.

Roger Sullivan addressed the Board and questioned if the City of Houghton would consider a swap with the County? Commissioner Britz stated the City of Houghton wants to be in discussion with the County.

Announcements:

None.

Adjournment:

A Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson and seconded by Commissioner Britz to adjourn at 3:23pm.

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

Albert Koskela, Chairman

Jennifer Kelly, County Clerk