

**HOUGHTON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
REGULAR MEETING  
SEPTEMBER 14, 2021**

The Houghton County Board of Commissioners held a Regular meeting on Tuesday, September 14, 2021, in the 5th Floor Conference room of the Courthouse, City of Houghton. The public was attending in person.

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 Anderson, seconded by Commissioner Janssen to approve the August 10, 2021 minutes as presented.

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

Approval of Agenda/Additions:

Commissioner Anderson asked for an addition for the Portage Lake Lift Bridge. Chairman Koskela stated it would go between #7-8.

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

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

Public Comments-Agenda Items Only (5 minutes per participant):

Roger Sullivan addressed the Board.

Commissioner Anderson stated anyone can put a request in writing and submit it to the Board of Commissioners.

Approval of Bills:

A Motion was made by Commissioner Tikkanen and seconded by Commissioner Britz to approve paying the bills submitted of \$ 1,888,677.32 as presented.

The Motion carried by the following vote.

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

NO: None 0.

Correspondence:

None.

Reports:

1. Standing committee

Commissioner Tikkanen reported to the Board on the following:

Transfer Station-10 tons have gone to the Recycling Center.

Commissioner Anderson reported to the Board on the following:

Census results. Commissioner Anderson provided a handout to the Board and discussed the 2.0% increase in Houghton County. He discussed the Houghton County Apportionment Committee and discussed the Committee having the Commissioner Districts done by October 1, 2021. The next Apportionment Meeting is on September 23, 2021 at 4:00 pm on the 5<sup>th</sup> floor of the courthouse. Anyone can submit a plan to the Committee.

Commissioner Anderson stated he attended the interviews for the appointment of the new Houghton County Sheriff, and there were excellent candidates.

Commissioner Janssen reported to the Board on the following:

Health Department-the lab at the Health Department has been certified. The State of Michigan is going to purchase a piece of equipment for the lab.

Commissioner Britz reported to the Board on the following:

Houghton County Road Commission-Received a \$117,444 grant. He attended the Portage Township Board meeting. Trustee Fink was not comfortable with the City of Houghton having annex to the Portage Township property on Sharon Avenue. If a millage was to pass by the voters, then they would consider the annexation into the City of Houghton.

The Board had discussion.

Commissioner Anderson discussed a 99 year 425 agreement.

Commissioner Britz discussed talking to Eric Waara to see if he would be in agreement.

Commissioner Tikkanen discussed District Court, Probate/Family Court, and the Sheriff being moved to the Sharon Avenue property.

Chairman Koskela reported to the Board on the following:

Airport-A caved in mine was just found on the Airport property.

2. Special Committee

None.

3. County Officers

Dennis Hext, Airport Manager, addressed the Board regarding the rising numbers at the airport, effective November 19<sup>th</sup> Sun Country will now have a charter, he discussed the caved in mine and it is estimated to be 500 feet deep and a fence has been put around the area. He is looking into funds to cap the mine. It is believed to be an exploratory mine shaft and the DQ is wanting to look at the caved in mine.

Lisa Mattila, County Treasurer, reported there were 16 properties sold at the 2018 Foreclosures, and the County made \$283,631.10. There will be two (2) parcels for sale at the November auction.

Todd LaRoux, Building Inspector, stated there have been 261 building permits this year, and 74 new houses have been built. The BS&A software is going forward and on schedule. There have been 96 new addresses entered for 911.

Commissioner Tikkanen commented on the EPA work crew cleaning up 5<sup>th</sup> Street in Calumet from the Fire. A portion of 4<sup>th</sup> street will be blocked off for approximately two (2) weeks. There may be consequences to the owners of the properties due to asbestos. EPA is trying to minimize the threats to the community.

New Business:

1. Administrator Ben Larson Resignation

Commissioner Anderson read Ben Larson's letter of resignation.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson, seconded by Commissioner Janssen to accept Ben Larson's letter of resignation as presented.

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

A Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson, seconded by Commissioner Janssen to advertise and accept applications by the deadline of September 28, 2021 and look at the applications at the September 29, 2021 meeting, and have interviews on October 5, 2021 at 1:00 pm.

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

2. Lift Bridge Restriction Letter of Support

Ben Larson, Administrator, stated he has received a lot of calls recently complaining about the 4:30 pm and 7:30 am sailboats going under the bridge. He has been in contact with 9<sup>th</sup> District Commander and the County is going to ask Community Partners to also submit letters of support requesting the US Coast Guard restrict lifts for pleasure crafts during the busiest of drive time hours.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Tikkanen, seconded by Commissioner Janssen to sign the letter of support as presented.

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

3. Board of Canvassers

The Board has discussion as to the process for appointing the two (2) Canvassers.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson, seconded by Commissioner Tikkanen to appoint Barbara Manninen for the Democrat Party, and to appoint Becky Bruin-Slot for the Republican Party.

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

4. John Sullivan Quincy Hill Overlook Request

John Sullivan addressed the Board regarding cleaning up the Quincy Overlook. He stated the total cost is approximately \$30,000. This would cover \$25,000 for the clearing of the trees, and a \$5,000 plaque. Quincy Mine Hoist, Keweenaw National Park Advisory Committee, and the Keweenaw National Park have all agreed to donate \$5,000. The Keweenaw National Park requested they pay for the \$5,000 plaque. To clean up the view is the intent.

Chairman Koskela stated there had been lots of opposition on this matter at a meeting.

Commissioner Anderson stated this property is an orphan site that MDOT maintains.

Chairman Koskela asked if this matter be put turned over to the County Attorney to find out if it is legal for the Board to consider doing.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson, seconded by Commissioner Britz to ask the County Attorney for a legal opinion and table this matter.

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

Commissioner Tikkanen stated he is not sure the County should be spending money on this with everything the County has happening for the Airport, jail, and deputies.

5. 2021-22 Budget Hearing Scheduled for 12:00 pm September 29<sup>th</sup>

A Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson and seconded by Commissioner Britz to have a budget hearing, review applicants for the Administrator position and Jeff Ratcliffe's public hearing for the Cross Country Sports loan project.

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

6. Anderson Tackman Three Year Audit Proposal

Ben Larson, Administrator stated the County is without an auditor at this time due to the passing of Debbie Bradford. If the County chooses to go with Anderson, Tackman & Company, it will save money.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Tikkanen and seconded by Commissioner Anderson to accept the three (3) year agreement with Anderson, Tackman & Company as presented.

The Motion carried by the following vote.

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

NO: None 0.

7. Houghton County Arena Walk Through for Commissioners and Public Sept 17 4 pm

A Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson, seconded by Commissioner Janssen to have the Commissioners do a walk-through of the Houghton County Arena on September 17, 2021 at 4:00 pm.

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

8. Portage Lake Lift Bridge

Commissioner Anderson stated people are upset with MDOT's pace. He discussed the finger joints and motor repairs. Two (2) of the four (4) finger joints have been replaced. The other two (2) should be done by the end of this week. The work is to continue until the snow arrives. The finger joints are scheduled to be done by November 7, 2021.

Commissioner Tikkanen asked about the Bridge Committee meeting, and if this is an emergency matter. He asked if the problems are being addressed and if another bridge should be in place. He felt MODT should prioritize their work and should provide any future lane closure with a 24 hour-7 day a week schedule.

Chairman Koskela is to discuss getting the Bridge Committee meetings going again with Chris VanArsdale.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson, seconded by Commissioner Tikkanen to write a letter to MDOT and explain the frustration felt with their current project, and ask them to acknowledge improvements for the future, put the traffic as a priority, and ask that an engineering study be done for an additional bridge.

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

9. Travel Requests

- a. Equalization Dept UP Assessors Assn Fall School in Escanaba \$1400
- b. Controller and 4 Commissioners to MAC annual Conference Mack Isle \$5699

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

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

10. Appropriations:

- a. Keweenaw Chamber of Commerce \$400.00

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

The Motion carried by the following vote.

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

NO: None 0.

Public Comments (5 minutes per participant):

Roger Sullivan addressed the Board.

Mike Mangin addressed the Board.

Announcements:

None.

Adjournment:

A Motion was made by Commissioner Tikkanen and seconded by Commissioner Anderson to adjourn.

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

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Albert Koskela, Chairman

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Jennifer Kelly, County Clerk