

**HOUGHTON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
REGULAR MEETING  
FEBRUARY 15, 2022**

The Houghton County Board of Commissioners held a Regular Meeting on Tuesday, February 15, 2022 at 5:00 p.m. in the 5<sup>th</sup> Floor Conference Room of the Courthouse, City of Houghton and public viewing 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 the County Clerk, Jennifer Kelly:

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

Approval of Minutes:

Commissioner Tikkanen requested on Page 4 to remove the sentence regarding Sara Huuki taking over the HR.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Tikkanen and seconded by Commissioner Janssen to approve the minutes of the February 7, 2022 meeting with the one (1) correction.

The Motion carried by the following vote.

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

NO: None 0.

Approval of Agenda/Additions:

Commissioner Tikkanen asked for #5 be added to the Agenda for a Board Workshop on the American Rescue Plan funds, and #6 be added for discussion on the Material Management-EGLE grant opportunity. Commissioner Anderson requested #7 be added to consider the FOIA Appeal from Joshua Vissers.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Janssen, seconded by Commissioner Britz to approve the Agenda with the three (3) additions as presented.

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

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

None.

Approval of Bills:

A Motion was made by Commissioner Tikkanen and seconded by Commissioner Anderson to approve paying the bills submitted of \$1,284,077.59.

The Motion carried by the following vote.

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

NO: None 0.

None.

Correspondence:

None.

Reports:

Standing Committee:

Commissioner Anderson reported to the Board on the following:

Bridgefest: Will be held the weekend of June 17, 2022. There will be an event to establish the Portage Lake Lift Bridge as a national landmark. A plaque will be replaced at the Redridge Dam for a previous award as a historical national landmark.

Portage Health Foundation: The Foundation received \$650,000 in donations. \$200,000 will be distributed to 22 non-profit organizations within a four (4) county area as part of the Giving Tuesday program.

Commissioner Anderson discussed the proposal for a 6% increase in county revenue according to the Governor's Budget.

Houghton County Fair: Carol and Rick Freeman received a 25-year heritage reward. Carol Saari and Steve Palosaari also received rewards. Madison Thomas and Joel Laux received youth awards.

Commissioner Tikkanen reported to the Board on the following:

2<sup>nd</sup> Bridge: The group needs to get a feasibility study done. They will work with two (2) MTU Professors and request that Representative Markkanen and Senator McBroom support the request for funding for the study to be done.

Transfer Station: Seven (7) additional security cameras will be installed along with a new computer.

County Audit: Commend all departments. The auditors will make a presentation to the Board at the March meeting.

Commissioner Janssen reported to the Board on the following:

Health Department: The Health Department has applied for and received substantial grants. They are working on getting the mobil van which NorthCare will supply and maintain for two (2) years. The lab has received \$350,000 in a grant.

WUPPDR-Commissioner Janssen has attended focus groups on a housing market study.

Commissioner Britz reported to the Board on the following:

Houghton County Sheriff Department-The Sheriff Department is waiting on a total of seven (7) patrol cars. The staff is frustrated on the high mileage on the current vehicles which have approximately 150,000-200,000 miles.

Jail: With the new laws and guidelines, the inmate count is down. The Committee has a meeting with Judge Daavettila next month.

Chairman Koskela reported to the Board on the following:

Thanked Commissioner Tikkanen for his hard work while covering for him the last month.

County Officers:

Dennis Hext, Airport Manager, informed the Board the numbers are holding for flights, and there are two (2) Sun Country flights in April and May 2022.

Lisa Mattila, Treasurer, stated there were 95 parcels in the 2019 Tax Foreclosures on March 31, 2022.

2020 Taxes-555 currently due. Forfeiture on March 1<sup>st</sup>.

Treasurer Mattila stated Pamela Fontaine is the new full time employee in her office.

Josh Saaranen, Sheriff, stated they have had 400 complaints through January. They are maintaining public safety 24/7. The Sheriff Department will be going to the schools for safety training. Matt Djerf is now a Deputy and will be assisting in the trainings.

Old Business:

1. Janssen & Distributor Opioid Settlement sign-on status amounts per County

Elizabeth Bjorn, Administrator, explained the outline in the Board's packets for the contribution to the counties.

Commissioner Tikkanen discussed the disbursement to the counties over eighteen (18) years and discussed where the money could be spent.

Commissioner Janssen questioned if the monies need to be spent towards the opioid crisis.

2. Manpower Consortium Status Houghton v. Gogebic

Elizabeth Bjorn, Administrator, stated she had spoken with the County Attorney and no Appeal has been requested. If it is requested, the County Attorney will inform her and the County Board within a certain time frame.

Commissioner Tikkanen wanted the public to know that Houghton County was not being sued.

3. Office Closures During Normal Courthouse Open Hours

Elizabeth Bjorn, Administrator, stated she met with Jennifer Kelly, County Clerk, for a lengthy meeting.

Clerk Kelly informed the board she will have an office policy in place for when the Clerk's Office is down to one (1) person so the office will hopefully be able to stay open.

New Business:

1. Coronavirus & Local Fiscal Recovery Interim and Final Rule Compliancy

Elizabeth Bjorn, Administrator, gave a brief discussion about the information on the Coronavirus & Local Fiscal Recovery Interim and Final Rule Compliancy in the Board's packets.

2. UPEA-Limited Professional Services-HVAC NTE: \$3,200

Elizabeth Bjorn discussed the tentative agreement for repairs and maintenance and HVAC on the first floor with UPEA.

Karyn Cooper stated the contract would be an hourly contract and not to exceed \$3,200.00.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Tikkanen, seconded by Commissioner Britz to hire UPEA for the limited and professional services be limited to not more than \$3,200.00.

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

Commissioner Tikkanen encouraged the Commissioners to look at the work on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor of the courthouse. Thanked Todd LaRoux and Tom Bingham for their hard work.

### 3. Houghton County Land Bank Annual Report 2021

Lisa Mattila, Treasurer, stated the Committee met seven (7) times in 2021. There are five (5) new tax foreclosure properties. At the close of 2021, there are about twenty-seven (27) parcels currently in the Land Bank. The inventory list of the parcels is on the Houghton County website with the majority of the parcels in Calumet. Treasurer Mattila thanked the Land Bank members, Jeff and Sam from KEDA, the Houghton County work camp crew and Alan Huhta, Max from the Youth Works team, Treasurer Staff, Circuit Court Probation and Community Service, and Superior Sand and Gravel.

Treasurer Mattila discussed a proposal for the ARP monies.

Treasurer Mattila will be preparing a press release for the five (5) parcels in Calumet for the renovations.

Commissioner Tikkanen discussed a proposal to the Board asking for participation in demolition funds with a 50/50 match with the municipalities or to obtain grant funds. The estimated demolition cost is unknown.

Treasurer Mattila said there was a bid for \$67,000.00 in demolition costs to remove the building at 106 Osceola Street.

Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson, seconded by Commissioner Tikkanen to support the Houghton County Land Bank Annual Report 2021 as presented.

The Motion carried by the following vote:

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

NO: None 0.

### 4. 2022 MSU Extension Agreement

Elizabeth Bjorn, Administrator, explained the agreement to the Board. Not many changes.

Commissioner Anderson discussed the \$40,000 the County pays, along with providing high speed internet and telephone that we provide at the MSU Extension office. It is a ADA compliant office space.

Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson, seconded by Commissioner Janssen to approve the 2022 MSU Extension Agreement as presented.

The Motion carried by the following vote:

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

NO: None 0.

### 5. Board Workshop-American Rescue Plan Funds

The Board discussed the American Rescue Plan workshop. They discussed having a first meeting with the department heads in the Board room.

The Board agreed to meet on Tuesday, March 8, 2022 at 1:00 p.m. Administrator Bjorn will post the meeting.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson, seconded by Commissioner Britz to have a Committee of the Whole meeting and to invite the department heads on Tuesday, March 8, 2022 at 1:00 pm.

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

Commissioner Anderson requested a fiscal report showing an estimated expenses of the monies spent on sick leave, security, materials, supplies for Covid from the last two (2) years. Administrator Bjorn will get that report to the Board.

#### 6. Material Management-EGLE

The Board discussed the EGLE Materials Management County Engagement Grant.

Lisa McKenzie from WUPPDR discussed the possible grant of \$10,000-\$12,000. Discussed the transition of solid waste to material waste management for the recycling resource system. She discussed the management gaps and challenges. She expects the legislature to proceed in the future. She asked for the Board to appoint one (1) person to sign the agreement.

Commissioner Tikkanen and Lisa McKenzie discussed reaching out to the surrounding six (6) counties. Volume is key to lower the costs and stated recycling takes volume.

WUPPDR will be doing a survey monkey and attempt to make the Material Management funded. Commissioner Tikkanen will work with WUPPDR as the board member.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Tikkanen, seconded by Commissioner Janssen to apply for the Material Management-EGLE with WUPPDR expediting the process.

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

#### 7. FOIA Appeal-Joshua Vissers

Elizabeth Bjorn, Administrator, discussed the FOIA appeal and Memorandum of Record that was in the Board's packets.

Commissioner Tikkanen stated these requested documents (check register) are available during business hours on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor and that the County is fully transparent. Arrangements can be made by coming into the courthouse.

Chairman Koskela stated people can come into the building.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Britz, seconded by Commissioner Anderson to deny the FOIA Appeal of Joshua Vissers and for the Board to uphold the determination.

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

#### 8. Travel

##### a. Todd LaRoux-Building Official Conference Fee \$75.00

A Motion was made by Commissioner Janssen, seconded by Commissioner Britz to approve the travel request.

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

9. Appropriations

- a. W.U.P.H.D. -\$66,584.50
- b. KEDA - \$20,000.00
- c. Northwoods Rail Transit Commission - \$300.00
- d. UPEDA Membership - \$500.00

A Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson, seconded by Commissioner Janssen to approve the four (4) above-mentioned appropriations as presented.

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

Public Comments: (5 minute limit)

Craig Waddell thanked the Board for having zoom.

James Mihelich discussed an email from Circle Power.

Announcements:

None.

Adjournment:

A Motion was made by Commissioner Tikkanen and seconded by Commissioner Janssen to adjourn at 6:12pm.

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