

**HOUGHTON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
REGULAR MEETING  
MAY 15, 2024**

The Houghton County Board of Commissioners held a Regular Meeting on Wednesday, May 15, 2024 at 4:30 p.m. in the 5<sup>th</sup> Floor Conference Room of the Courthouse, City of Houghton with the public viewing in person and by Microsoft Teams.

**Call to Order:**

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Tikkanen at 4:30 p.m.

**Pledge of Allegiance:**

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Chairman Tikkanen.

**Roll Call:**

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

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

**Approval of Minutes April 11, 2024 Regular Meeting & April 24, 2024 Special Meeting:**

A Motion was made by Commissioner Keranen and seconded by Commissioner Britz to approve the minutes of the April 11<sup>th</sup> and April 24<sup>th</sup> meetings as presented.

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

**Approval of Agenda:**

Administrator Larson requested adding #4 for a Harbor Development Project Resolution. Commissioner Britz requested adding #5 for discussion on a Jail Development Committee.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Keranen and seconded by Commissioner Anderson to accept the Agenda as presented with the two (2) additions.

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

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

None.

**Approval of Bills - \$3,636,811.02:**

A Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson and seconded by Commissioner Janssen to approve paying the bills submitted of \$3,636,811.02.

The Motion carried by the following vote.

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

NO: None 0.

**Correspondence:**

None.

Reports:

**Standing Committee:**

Commissioner Janssen reported to the Board on the following:

Transfer Station-the numbers for household items, and recycling were up the last month.

She attended the MAC Legislative Spring Conference in Lansing.

Commissioner Britz reported to the Board on the following:

He also attended the MAC Legislative Spring Conference in Lansing.

Commissioner Anderson reported to the Board on the following:

He asked Administrator Larson to provide an updated employee list and a list showing the Commissioners Appointments.

Health Department: Kate Beer will be retiring by the end of the year. Her position will be posted soon.

Commented that he was happy that the Drought Loans through the SBA were approved for our County businesses, and that it was good to see Houghton County added as the 43<sup>rd</sup> County to the first 42 when we were not included in the declaration.

WUPPDR: The Annual meeting will be on September 16, 2024.

Marina: Commented on how nice it looks with many of the trees now removed from the property at the marina.

Smart Zone: They received a \$50,000 Grant for a feasibility study and an additional \$30,000 for an innovation center that will focus on Manufacturing and Innovation.

Commissioner Keranen reported to the Board on the following:

He commented on Don Mclean wanting to build condominiums and is having issues with EGLE. He asked the Board to review a letter that Jeff Ratcliffe drafted. Commissioner Britz stated the Health Department is in support of the condominiums.

### **County Officers:**

Treasurer, Lisa Mattila, stated that as of 3/1/24 there were 302 parcels on the tax foreclosure list, and from the 2022 taxes there were 22 foreclosed properties. The Annual Land Bank report is on the County website. A demolition project will be completed in the fall. She stated money from the fire insurance from the Village of Calumet has been turned over to the demolition fund.

Prosecutor, Dan Helmer, stated the part time assistant prosecutor has resigned. He will try to fill the position, but will be discussing salary increases for his staff. The Union employees in his office want to get out of the Union. In July, they will go to a paperless system and will be implementing the Karpel system. He will be taking in neglect and abuse cases, and he shared that the hourly wages costing Houghton County are significant by having this done outside of his office. He discussed a drug forfeiture fund and how he hopes to create mini grant funds for law enforcement and victims of sexual assault.

Dan Kowalski, Sheriff Department Deputy, reported they currently have 27 inmates.

Todd LaRoux, Building Department Manager, stated all of their numbers for permits are up by 47 permits as compared to last year and informed the Board that a permit was issued for the new church on Gundlach Road.

County Clerk/Register of Deeds, Jennifer Kelly reported there are 11 millage proposals on the ballots throughout Houghton County for the August 6, 2024 election. She was notified that she has saved the Cities and Townships an additional \$19,779.00 by applying & being approved for a 2<sup>nd</sup> grant for 3 additional tabulators for the Early Voting Center.

**Old Business:**

None.

**New Business:**

**1. MSU Extension Update**

John Sullivan introduced himself to the Board. He has been a new employee for District 1 that covers the western half of the UP since January 2024. He conducts Veterans outreach, and helps those who need food and other items.

Administrator Larson stated the 2024 Veteran’s Fair will be held at the SDC on June 5, 2024 from 1:00 pm until 5:00 pm.

**2. Remonumentation Contracts**

Joe Foster applied for the 2024 Grants. They have been approved. 33 corners in Otter Lake should be done this year. \$66,075 is the grant amount.

**3. Seth Truth in Taxation Public Hearing for June 11, 2024 Regular Meeting**

This Public Hearing will be scheduled for June 11, 2024 and put on the Agenda.

**4. Harbor Development Resolution**

Administrator Larson stated the DNR is willing to pay \$176,000 with a local share match of \$44,000 to get the bathrooms and showers ADA compliant at the Marina. A wheelchair lift will also be installed by the docks on one of the piers to assist the handicapped with a safe way to get off their boats and up onto the land.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson and seconded by Commissioner Britz to adopt Resolution 24-11 as presented.

The Motion carried by the following vote.

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

NO: None 0.

**Houghton County Board of Commissioners**

Houghton County Courthouse  
401 East Houghton Avenue  
Houghton, MI 49931  
(906) 482-8307



Tom Tikkanen *Chairman*  
*District 1*  
Roy Britz *Vice Chairman*  
*District 5*  
Joel Keranen *Commissioner*  
*District 2*  
Glenn Anderson *Commissioner*  
*District 3*  
Gretchen Janssen *Commissioner*  
*District 4*

**RESOLUTION FOR HARBOR DEVELOPMENT PROJECT AGREEMENT  
RESOLUTION 24-11**

WHEREAS, the County of Houghton will appropriate all funds necessary to complete the project during the project period and to provide the Houghton County Marina \$44,000 to match the grant authorized by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources-Parks and Recreation Division; and

WHEREAS, the County of Houghton will maintain satisfactory financial accounts, documents, and records to make them available to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources-Parks and Recreation Division for auditing at reasonable times; and

WHEREAS, the County of Houghton will construct the project and provide such funds, services, and materials as may be necessary to satisfy the terms of said Agreement; and

WHEREAS, the County of Houghton will ensure that all premises, buildings, and equipment related procedures comply with all applicable State and Federal regulations; and

WHEREAS, the County of Houghton will regulate the use of the facilities constructed under this Agreement to assure the use thereof by the public on equal and reasonable terms; and

WHEREAS, the County of Houghton will enforce all State statutes and local ordinances pertaining to marine safety and to enforce statutes of the State of Michigan within the confines of the GRANTEE pertaining to the licensing of watercraft. Watercraft not fully complying with the laws of the State of Michigan relative to licensing and shall not be permitted to use the facility until full compliance with those laws has been made; and

WHEREAS, the County of Houghton will comply with any and all terms of said Agreement including all terms not specifically set forth in the foregoing portions of this Resolution; and

THEREFORE, BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED that the County of Houghton, Michigan, does hereby accept the terms of the Agreement as received from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources-Parks and Recreation Division and the County of Houghton does hereby approve the Harbor Development Project Agreement.

Moved by Commissioner:

Supported by Commissioner:

Roll Call Vote:

Yes:

No:

Motion Carried.

RESOLUTION DECLARED ADOPTED.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Houghton County Board of Commissioners

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

I, Jennifer Kelly, County Clerk of Houghton County, do hereby certify and set my seal to the above Resolution as adopted May 15, 2024, at the Houghton County Courthouse, 401 East Houghton Avenue, Houghton, MI 49931.

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Jennifer Kelly, Houghton County Clerk

## 5. Jail Development Committee

Commissioner Britz discussed the laws required for a new jail and suggested getting a group together to discuss matters. The Board discussed having Commissioners Britz and Anderson to continue working with the Sheriff to appoint a new jail development committee.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson and seconded by Commissioner Janssen to have Sheriff Saaranen set up a new Jail Development workgroup.

The Motion carried by the following vote.

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

NO: None 0.

Administrator Larson stated the property should be annexed in June. The City of Houghton and Portage Township will need to take action at that time for a Petition that our County Attorney will be drafting for their consideration of the Annexation from Portage Township to the City of Houghton.

## **6. Travel**

### **a. Michigan Association of Equalization Directors Annual Conference (\$1,785)**

Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson and seconded by Commissioner Janssen to approve the above-mentioned travel request as presented for the Equalization Department to travel to Escanaba.

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

## **7. Appropriations:**

### **a. Copper Country Mental Health-\$13,707.91**

### **b. NorthCare Network -\$23,849.50**

### **c. WUPPDR 3<sup>rd</sup> Q-\$4,461.25**

Motion was made by Commissioner Britz and seconded by Commissioner Anderson to approve the above-mentioned Appropriations as presented.

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

## **Public Comments:**

John Wallace addressed the Board regarding pilt project updates. He will report at the June 11, 2024 meeting and be on the Agenda. He is doing a 3 acre burn in Sidnaw.

Craig Waddell addressed the Board regarding a 2<sup>nd</sup> bridge update. Commissioner Anderson stated 2 requests have been sent to the state, and 1 request to the federal government. Neither have responded to Houghton County. Commissioner Tikkanen suggested getting MDOT on board for a feasibility study. Administrator Larson stated Civil Engineering Students from MTU may be available to assist with a study.

## **Announcements:**

None.

## **Adjournment:**

A Motion was made by Commissioner Keranen and seconded by Commissioner Anderson to adjourn at 5:47p.m.

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

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Tom Tikkanen, Chairman

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Jennifer Kelly, County Clerk