

**HOUGHTON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
WORK SESSION
JUNE 2, 2025**

The Houghton County Board of Commissioners held a Work Session on Monday, June 2, 2025 at 10:00 a.m. in the 5th 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 10:00 a.m.

Pledge of Allegiance:

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Chairman Tikkanen.

Roll call:

The following commissioners responded to roll call done by Chief Deputy County Clerk, Renee Cunningham:

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

Agenda Additions:

None.

Public Comments-Agenda Items only *(3 minute limit):

Administrator Rheault fixed the audio on Microsoft teams.

None.

Houghton County Board of Commissioners Work Session:

1. BOC 2025 Meeting Schedule

The Board discussed changes for the June 10th meeting.

2. Jail Campaign

Commissioner Britz discussed what the building would look like. He suggested getting local contractors to bid on the design. Fixed fee is \$3,500.00 for Abonmarche Byce.

Commissioner Anderson suggested making the building look basic but professional. Not fancy. Concept drawing should show the layout of the pods.

Commissioner Britz viewed designs of other prisons. 2 steel buildings. 1 for the Sheriff and 1 for the jail.

Commissioner Keranen asked if Abonmarche Byce would be the constructors or manage construction.

Chairman Tikkanen suggested submitting a draft of the design and suggested Commissioner Anderson handle this. A construction manager needs to be hired.

Commissioner Anderson stated once the bids come in and the County locks in one, the bonds will not be sold until then.

Chairman Tikkanen discussed a handout for a 70 bed facility. He suggested reaching out to Abonmarche Byce for a proposal for next week and to get the message out to the public. A tri-fold handout will be paid by the League of Women Voters. They discussed going door to door to handout out the tri-fold to the public.

Faith Morrison will contact Becky Bruin-Slot to see about putting up a banner on her property.

Commissioner Anderson suggested looking for a few donors and churches who would support a mailer. It would be a direct mailer. Faith Morrison will look into the cost.

Commissioner Britz will follow up with donors with the Sheriff. They discussed a committee be called "Citizens Committee For A Safe And Effective Jail". They discussed if the townships are signing on for a new jail.

Faith Morrison volunteered to do a 20 minute video for a presentation.

Chairman Tikkanen stated he will be on the Citizens Committee for a Safe and Effective Jail Committee.

Faith Morrison stated there should be 2-5 people on the Committee.

Commissioner Anderson stated the County cannot write a check for funding, but the Board can support the Committee.

Chairman Tikkanen said the millage on the website is not correct and will be fixed. He stated the League of Women Voters will be handing out flyers at parades.

3. Agenda Item Request Process

Chairman Tikkanen stated clarification is needed to have the agenda posted by Friday and to have the same policy for BOC meetings and Work Sessions. He recommended modifying the heading for the Agenda Process.

4. VC3

He suggested having a full special board meeting with VC3. To allow the staff to address concerns.

Commissioner Anderson questioned the length of the contract with VC3 of 4 years and to evaluate after 1 year. He discussed having an in-house IT or an employee from VC3. He questioned if we could have specific days to have in house IT.

Chairman Tikkanen discussed the meeting to focus on concerns. The County was left in disarray from other IT. He questions who is in charge, and who can choose the level of importance. He feels there is a good level of accounting on where things are at right now.

Teresa Hill, HR, stated she has a meeting with VC3 on Tuesday, June 3rd. She should see all tickets generated by everyone.

Chairman Tikkanen asked that the agenda for next week set a date for a Special meeting.

Commissioner Anderson asked what the cost would be for one (1) year to have an on-site IT. Possibly model someone for hiring our own employee to work with VC3. Maybe Remcey.

Chairman Tikkanen stated all board members have a working understanding on what is going on.

Commissioner Anderson stated VC3 cannot work with phone issues.

Commissioner Keranen discussed the cost difference with having an IT person versus VC3.

Chairman Tikkanen discussed having a task force. Teresa Hill will let him know when she speaks with VC3. Remcey could be a candidate to work with when we are integrated with VC3.

The County had budgeted \$300,000.00 for IT. The IT wage was \$100,000.00 and Karhu was \$100,816.00. Cloud storage cost was \$200,000.00. \$100,000 is the cost for VC3.

Chairman Tikkanen again said to set up a meeting with VC3 on site and to add it to the next agenda.

5. Wage Study Progress

Theresa Hill, HR, stated the wage study was on hold to work on the jail bond. Gallagher can do the work for \$50,000.00. MGT is the second consulting firm for \$58,000.00.

Chairman Tikkanen discussed both with a list of comparables. Taxable values considered as well.

Teresa Hill stated the work would take approximately three (3) months to do.

Chairman Tikkanen stated Teresa Hill should make sure we get a top-notch report.

Commissioner Keranen will do the work.

Chairman Tikkanen stated he wants to make sure employees are compensated fairly. This will help with union negotiations.

Administrator Rheault stated no need to do study often when wages are based on percentages.

Chairman Tikkanen asked Commissioner Keranen to put this on a fast track for the next board meeting.

6. Telephone System

Chairman Tikkanen stated it is difficult to move forward with the current phone system. There is progress rebuilding the system. He questions how they can make a breakthrough. The County is still waiting on a phone system.

Chairman Tikkanen discussed the phone system. Chelsea found out in September that the contract with Baraga Telephone was canceled. The cancellation was not run through proper channels. Baraga Telephone cannot help us with the new phones. The previous phones cannot be located, and the previous IT will not return phone calls.

Teresa Hill, HR, discussed Up and Running. She has not received a call back from Baraga Telephone to talk about a contract to buy new phones.

Commissioner Janssen stated she received an email from M. Koray Inal from Baraga Telephone.

Commissioner Anderson discussed scheduling a meeting with Baraga Telephone and Up and Running.

Chairman Tikkanen asked Commissioners Anderson and Janssen to work on scheduling a meeting with Baraga Telephone and Up and Running.

Commissioner Britz asked if anyone has contacted companies that can work for telephone systems.

Matt Thyor stated he was contacted to present an offer. He did not get an appointment scheduled. He has not been able to communicate with the County. He asked why they were not contracted or communicated with. He discussed lower costs and for the County to have a local company. He felt overlooked and the Board not looking locally. He asked about phone costs. He stated his company manages over 50 systems. He has been raising his hand on Microsoft Teams and has been overlooked.

Commissioners Janssen and Anderson will set up a meeting with Matt.

Public Comment-*(3 minute limit):

None.

Announcements:

Chairman Tikkanen discussed the direct mailers being looked into by Faith Morrison.

Commissioner Britz will look into a list of donors with the Sheriff.

Chairman Tikkanen will set up the Committee for the Jail Committee.

Commissioner Keranen and Teresa Hill will work on the wage study.

Commissioners Anderson and Janssen will work with Up and Running and set up a meeting with VC3.

Adjournment:

A Motion was made by Commissioner Keranen and seconded by Commissioner Anderson to adjourn at 11:14 a.m.

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

Tom Tikkanen, Chairman

Jennifer Kelly, County Clerk