

**HOUGHTON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
REGULAR MEETING & PUBLIC HEARING  
MARCH 10, 2026**

The Houghton County Board of Commissioners held a Regular Meeting & Public Hearing on Tuesday, March 10, 2026 at 6:00 p.m. in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor Circuit Courtroom of the Courthouse, City of Houghton with the public viewing in person and by Zoom.

**Call to Order:**

The meeting was called to order by Vice-Chairman Britz at 6:00 p.m.

**Pledge of Allegiance:**

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Vice-Chairman Britz.

**Roll Call:**

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

Joel Keranen, District 2; Gretchen Janssen, District 4; Roy Britz, District 5.

Absent: Tom Tikkanen, District 1 and Glenn Anderson, District 3.

**Public Hearing-Hamlin Apartments and Retail Rebuild**

**1. Open Hearing**

Motion was made by Commissioner Janssen and seconded by Commissioner Keranen to open the meeting.

The Motion carried by a voice vote. Ayes 3, Nays 0.

**2. Discussion and Public Comment**

Jeff Ratcliffe stated the Resolution was for a clean up of land that was approved by the Brownfield Authority.

Tom Curran, owner of South Range Pub, stated the consultant informed him that the consultant drew the lines incorrectly. Tom requested a hard survey be done. Commissioner Keranen asked if the project has begun. Tom said quite a bit is done. Todd LaRoux stated the zoning was done through the South Range Village and the building is in the drywall stage. They obtained the permit.

Jeff Ratcliffe stated the project met the zoning requirements based on a plated lot. Mac, the consultant, stated he did make a mistake in drawing the lines. The Brownfield is only for the Hamlin parcel.

Vice-Chairman Britz asked how much money they are looking for. Mac stated it was \$136,000, 10 years in taxes that will be captured over 15 years. Adams Township and the Village of South Range have approved already. Commissioner Janssen agreed Lot 16 should be surveyed. Commissioner Keranen stated the Board is only dealing with the Brownfield.

Tom Curran stated he has 4 surveys done that cost \$1,400. It has the West end of the property.

Jeff Ratcliffe stated the capture of taxes is based on the property ID, it is a plated lot, and the East boundary is unknown. Mac stated he would revise the map. Jeff Ratcliffe stated he talked to Craig Hamlin, and stated Craig was in Green Bay. Tom Curran stated he would send Mac the 4 surveys.

**3. Close Hearing**

A Motion was made by Commissioner Keranen and seconded by Commissioner Janssen to close the meeting.

The Motion carried by a voice vote. Ayes 3, Nays 0.

**Approval of Minutes: February 2, 2026 Work Session; February 10, 2026 Regular Meeting; March 2, 2026 Work Session:**

Commissioner Keranen stated Clerk Kelly requested the February 10<sup>th</sup> minutes not be approved as they are not complete. She is waiting on Commissioner Anderson's statement.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Janssen and seconded by Commissioner Keranen to approve the minutes from the February 2, 2026 Work Session and the March 2, 2026 Work Session as presented.

The Motion carried by a voice vote. Ayes 3, Nays 0.

**Approval of Agenda/Additions:**

Commissioner Janssen requested adding #10 for the appointment of Keith Anderson-97<sup>th</sup> District Court Administrator/Magistrate.

Vice-Chairman Britz requested adding #11 for the Sharon Avenue Properties RFP's.

Todd LaRoux asked that the name be corrected under travel to Chad Hammerstrom.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Keranen and seconded by Commissioner Janssen to accept the agenda as presented with the two (2) additions and one (1) correction.

The Motion carried by a voice vote. Ayes 3, Nays 0.

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

None.

**Approval of Bills-\$1,672,537.41:**

A Motion was made by Commissioner Keranen and seconded by Commissioner Janssen to approve paying the bills submitted of \$1,672,537.41 as presented.

The Motion carried by the following vote.

YES: Keranen, Janssen, Britz 3.

NO: None 0.

**Added-Reports:**

**Standing Committee:**

Commissioner Keranen reported to the Board on the following:

He congratulated the Houghton Gremlins Hockey team for winning the State title.

Commissioner Janssen reported to the Board on the following:

She toured the Delta County Jail. She will share her report with the Jail Committee.

Vice-Chairman Britz reported to the Board on the following:

Road Commission-snow total 255.4 in Painesdale as of the end of February. Road restrictions began on March 4<sup>th</sup> until further notice. Semco gas will need a permit to run gas lines along the roads according to the Attorney's opinion. They will be mailing the opinion to the townships.

**Unfinished Business:**

**1. Start Small, Funding request Final Approval due to inconclusive Minutes during last meeting**

Vice-Chairman Britz stated the February 10<sup>th</sup> meeting minutes had an error. He stated it should have said \$200,000 was approved for ARPA Funds. There is \$43,500 left. Start Small requested \$41,000.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Keranen and seconded by Commissioner Janssen to amend the February 10<sup>th</sup> minutes to say \$41,000 not \$144,500.

The Motion carried by a voice vote. Ayes 3, Nays 0.

**2. Building Department Job Search Update**

Todd LaRoux stated he had received 8 applications. 3 had a building trade. He recommended the Board approve Joel Wattson for the Building Department Inspector position.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Janssen and seconded by Commissioner Keranen to approve hiring Joel Wattson as the Building Department Inspector.

The Motion carried by a voice vote. Ayes 3, Nays 0.

**New Business:**

**1. Amendment to Reciprocal Easement Agreement**

Ben Larson stated the easement is required for the easement to Industrial Drive. Vice-Chairman Britz stated the Airport Board approved this agreement.

Motion was made by Commissioner Keranen and seconded by Commissioner Britz to adopt the Amendment to Reciprocal Easement Agreement as presented.

The Motion carried by a voice vote. Ayes 3, Nays 0.

**2. Resolution Brownfield Plan**

Motion was made by Commissioner Janssen and seconded by Commissioner Keranen to approve the Hamlin Apartments and Retail Rebuild Resolution #26-03 as presented.

The Motion carried by the following vote.

YES: Janssen, Keranen, Britz 3.

NO: None. 0

ABSENT: Tikkanen, Anderson 2.

**APPROVAL OF HAMLIN APARTMENTS AND RETAIL REBUILD  
BROWNFIELD PLAN  
RESOLUTION #26-03**

Motion by: \_\_\_\_\_, Supported by: \_\_\_\_\_

WHEREAS, the Michigan Brownfield Redevelopment Financing Act, Act 381, P.A. 1996 as amended, authorizes municipalities to create a brownfield redevelopment authority to promote the revitalization, redevelopment, and reuse of contaminated, blighted, functionally obsolete, historically designated or housing property through tax increment financing of Eligible Activities in a Brownfield Plan; and

WHEREAS, The Houghton County Board of Commissioners established the Houghton County Brownfield Redevelopment Authority in accordance with Act 381; and

WHEREAS, The Houghton County Brownfield Redevelopment Authority has reviewed the Brownfield Plan for the Hamlin Apartments and Retail Rebuild in the Village of South Range and Adams Township at their February 13, 2026 meeting and recommended approval by the Houghton County Board of Commissioners and concurrence by the South Range Village Council and Adams Township Board of Trustees; and

WHEREAS, the Hamlin Apartments and Retail Rebuild Brownfield Plan was reviewed and a resolution of conditional concurrence was approved by the South Range Village Council at their February 5, 2026 meeting and Adams Township Board of Trustees at their February 9, 2026 meeting, as required by Act 381; and

WHEREAS, the Houghton County Board of Commissioners has determined that the Brownfield Plan constitutes a public purpose of workforce housing, additional private investment and increased property tax value; and

WHEREAS, a public hearing on the Brownfield Plan has been noticed and held on March 10, 2026 and notice to taxing jurisdictions has been provided in compliance with the requirements of Act 381;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, WHEREAS, the Houghton County Board of Commissioners has reviewed the Brownfield Plan and finds, in accordance with the requirements of Section 14 of Act 381 that:

- (a) The Brownfield Plan meets the requirements of Section 13 of Act 381, Brownfield Plan Provisions as described in the Brownfield Plan, consistent with format recommended by the State of Michigan, including a description of the costs intended to be paid with tax increment revenues, a brief summary of eligible activities, estimate of captured taxable value and tax increment revenues, method of financing, maximum amount of indebtedness, beginning date and duration of capture, estimate of impact on taxing jurisdictions, legal description of eligible property, estimates of persons residing on the eligible property if applicable, and a plan and provisions for relocation of residents, if applicable.;
- (b) The proposed method of financing the costs of eligible activities, private financing arrangement by the developer is feasible and that the authority will not arrange financing, as described in Section 3.2 of the Plan;
- (c) The costs of eligible activities proposed are reasonable and necessary to carry out the purposes of Act 381, including meeting regulatory requirements and the cost estimates are based on evaluation from certified professionals, experience in comparable projects, and preliminary discussions with reputable companies, as described in Section 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3 of the Brownfield Plan; and
- (d) The amount of captured taxable value estimated from the adoption of the Brownfield Plan is reasonable, as calculated in Table 2 of the Plan, based on calculations of the tax revenues derived from taxable value increases and millage rates approved and authorized by the taxing jurisdictions on an annualized basis and balances against the outstanding eligible activity obligation approved as part of the Brownfield Plan and expenses reviewed and approved by the Houghton County Brownfield Redevelopment Authority; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that pursuant to the Brownfield Redevelopment Financing Act, Act 381 of the Public Acts of 1996, as amended, being MCL 125.2651, *et seq*, the Houghton County Board of Commissioners hereby approves the Brownfield Plan for the Hamlin Apartments and Retail Rebuild.

Ayes:  
Nays:  
Absent:

RESOLUTION DECLARED ADOPTED.

I, Jennifer Kelly, County Clerk of the County of Houghton, do hereby certify and set my seal to the above resolution as adopted March 10, 2026 at the Houghton County Courthouse, 401 East Houghton Street, Houghton, Michigan.

Jennifer Kelly, County Clerk

**3. Louis Vallance, Review of resolution/letter of support for bringing Amtrak service to the Upper Peninsula**

Louis Vallance appeared by Zoom. He stated he is proposing to bring Amtrak to the Upper Peninsula. He stated he sent documents to Administrator Rheault by email.

Motion was made by Commissioner Keranen and seconded by Commissioner Janssen to table this until the future.

The Motion carried by a voice vote. Ayes 3, Nays 0.

**4. Review of resolution supporting House Bills 5152 & 5153**

Motion was made by Commissioner Keranen and seconded by Commissioner Janssen to table this matter until the Board hears from MAC.

The Motion carried by a voice vote. Ayes 3, Nays 0.

**5. Review of resolution opposing any legislation preempting local control for the construction of data centers/battery storage facilities**

Commissioner Keranen discussed having local control.

Motion was made by Commission Keranen and seconded by Commissioner Janssen to table this matter.

The Motion carried by a voice vote. Ayes 3, Nays 0.

**6. Houghton County E911 Advisory Board Purchase Request \$27, 500.00**

**7. Houghton County E911 Advisory Board Purchase Request \$8,000.00**

Motion was made by Commissioner Janssen and seconded by Commissioner Keranen to approve the \$27,500.00 for the Fire Department pagers and the \$8,000.00 for the 800 MHZ batteries.

The Motion carried by the following vote.

YES: Janssen, Keranen, Britz 2.

NO: None. 0

**8. Review of proposed Deputy Finance Manager position**

Administrator Rheault stated that in three (3) months, she cannot find anyone to take the temporary position. Commissioner Keranen suggested saving money and using someone in the courthouse to work with Administrator Rheault. Administrator Rheault stated the County was written up by the audits and that is why the Accounts Payable was moved upstairs. Commissioner Keranen suggested having Sara assist if she was willing. Todd LaRoux stated he would like Sara to only remain in the Building Department due to how busy they are.

Motion was made by Commission Janssen and seconded by Vice-Chairman Britz to approve the Administrator hiring a full time Deputy Finance Manager position.

The Motion carried by the following vote.

YES: Janssen, Britz 2.

NO: Keranen 1.

**9. Tri-County Public Defenders February 2026 Payment Request-\$76,041.27**

Motion was made by Commissioner Janssen and seconded by Commissioner Keranen to pay \$76,041.27 to the Tri-County Public Defenders for the February 2026 payment as presented.

The Motion carried by a voice vote. Ayes 3 Nays 0.

**10. Appointment of Keith Anderson-97<sup>th</sup> District Court Administrator/Magistrate**

Motion was made by Commissioner Janssen and seconded by Commissioner Keranen to approve the appointment of Keith Anderson as the new 97<sup>th</sup> District Court Administrator/Magistrate.

The Motion carried by a voice vote. Ayes 3 Nays 0.

**11. Sharon Avenue Properties RFP's**

Vice-Chairman Britz stated 3 RFP's were received as follows:

Traverse Engineering Services, PC	\$21,500
OHM	\$20,000
UPEA	\$34,750

Todd LaRoux stated OHM had a construction engineer at the property and stated the trusses can be fixed. He recommended the Board go with OHM as they have schematic designs from four (4) years ago. Vice-Chairman Britz stated the County would save \$11,000 in storage costs if everything was moved to the Sharon Avenue property.

Motion was made by Commissioner Janssen and seconded by Commissioner Keranen to approve the RFP from OHM for \$20,000 as presented.

The Motion carried by the following vote.

YES: Janssen, Keranen, Britz 3.

NO: None 0.

**Travel:**

**1. Building Department, Chad Hammerstrom**

Motion was made by Commissioner Janssen and seconded by Commissioner Keranen to approve \$1,310 for Chad Hammerstrom for his continued education as presented.

The Motion carried by a voice vote. Ayes 3, Nays 0.

**Appropriations:**

- 1. Keweenaw Economic Development Alliance-\$20,000**
- 2. Copper Country Community Mental Health-\$13,707.91**

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

The Motion carried by a voice vote. Ayes 3, Nays 0.

**Public Comments:**

Faith Morrison, by Zoom, commented on the Committee reports due in April. Karen Timonen praised the plow drivers and thanked Commissioner Keranen for trying to save the County money.

**Announcements:**

None.

**Adjournment:**

A Motion was made by Commissioner Keranen and seconded by Commissioner Janssen to adjourn at 7:26 p.m.

The Motion carried by a voice vote. Ayes 3, Nays 0.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Tom Tikkanen, Chairman

\_\_\_\_\_  
Jennifer Kelly, County Clerk

APPROVED: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
CLERK'S INITIALS