

**HOUGHTON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
WORK SESSION  
MARCH 2, 2026**

The Houghton County Board of Commissioners held a Work Session on Monday, March 2, 2026 at 10:00 a.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 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 County Clerk, Jennifer Kelly:

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

By Microsoft Teams: Joel Keranen, District 2.

**Agenda/Additions:**

Commissioner Anderson requested discussion about increasing the Counties liability coverage and to discuss preparing a letter of appreciation to Congressman Bergman for the 2 earmarks for the police vehicles and the road repairs on the Houghton Canal Road.

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

Katie LaCosse discussed the #1 Agenda item and asked that it go on the March agenda.

Valorie Troesch stated the current jail is not capable of holding immigrants. She supports the #1 Agenda item.

Heather Mrosz stated she supports the #1 Agenda item.

Sara Green stated she supports the #1 Agenda item.

Craig Waddell stated he supports the #1 Agenda item.

Eve Johnson stated she supports the #1 Agenda item.

Joan Chaudde stated she supports the #1 Agenda item.

Sara Huuki read a statement regarding the #5 Agenda item.

**Houghton County Board of Commissioners Work Session:**

- 1. Katie LaCosse, review of resolution protecting equal access to public services, ensuring the security of K-12 and Michigan Technological University students, and governing the use of County property for civil immigration enforcement**

Commissioner Anderson stated he and Chairman Tikkanen will not be at the March 10<sup>th</sup> meeting.

Chairman Tikkanen read out loud some of the Resolution. He asked who Keweenaw Indivisible is. Katie LaCosse stated they are a non-partisan and community group. Valorie Troesch stated the National group paid over \$4 million in medical debt. Heather Mrosz stated there are over

100 residents in the group, and there are 8 on the leadership team. Richard Canevez stated they are a non-partisan group, and there will be a candidate forum next week. Commissioner Britz stated he has some issues with the proposed Resolution and does not feel the Board can tell the Sheriff what to do. Chairman Tikkanen requested copies of any Resolutions from Keweenaw Indivisible that have passed. This will go on the April Agenda.

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

Louis Vallance was not present in person or online. Chairman Tikkanen stated Louis was wanting a letter of support. Commissioner Anderson stated the City of Marquette adopted a letter of support. Chairman Tikkanen suggested having the Administrator follow up with Louis Vallance and get more information. Joan Chaudde stated there is an application showing the lower peninsula and the plans to get railroads from Detroit to the Mackinaw Bridge.

## **3. Review of resolution supporting House Bills 5152 & 5153**

Commissioner Britz stated the number 5153 needs to be fixed on the Resolution. Chairman Tikkanen suggested the Administrator follow up with the Michigan Association of Counties for their opinion and to provide Treasurer Mattila with a copy of the resolution. This will go on the March Agenda.

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

Commissioner Janssen stated she would like this to be on a future agenda. Chairman Tikkanen discussed language being repealed. Joan Chaudde stated there is a data center in the Eastern UP that is very loud and next to a school. It is on approximately 200 acres. She suggested the County to be in control. Commissioner Anderson agreed to local control. Commissioner Janssen suggested moving this to the next agenda and questioned if this should be forwarded to the townships in Houghton County. Chairman Tikkanen suggested forwarding this to the Prosecutor for review and a re-write. Commissioner Keranen agreed to give this resolution to the Prosecutor. Chairman Tikkanen suggested waiting until the re-write before giving the resolution to the townships. Todd LaRoux discussed no zoning.

## **5. Review of proposed Deputy Finance Manager position**

Commissioner Anderson stated the issues with the Tri County Public Defenders has never been done correctly and has cost the County thousands of dollars to get help to correct things. Chairman Tikkanen discussed moving this to the next agenda.

## **6. Final Jail Committees Reports**

Chairman Tikkanen stated there is a Jail Committee meeting at 4:00 pm on March 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Commissioner Britz stated the Sharon Avenue Properties Committee is waiting for 3 RFP's to come back from OHM, UPEA and Travers Engineering by the March meeting.

Chairman Tikkanen stated he hoped to receive the document on the Canal View later today. Commissioner Keranen stated he was waiting for that document for the County Held Properties Committee for his report.

## **7. Increasing County liability coverage**

Commissioner Anderson suggested getting a quote for the Board to consider at the next meeting.

## **8. Letter of Appreciation to Congressman Bergman**

Chairman Tikkanen suggested the Administrator prepare a letter of appreciation to Congressman Bergman for the next meeting.

**Continue 2.** Louis Vallance appeared on Microsoft Teams. He discussed Amtrak going through the UP, lower Michigan and other states. The railways would connect to the National railways. He stated there is federal and state funding and there is approximately \$8 billion available in grants. He stated there would be one train per day. He is requesting a non-binding letter of support or resolution from the County Board. There would be possibly 300 passengers coming to the Keweenaw Peninsula every day. There would be employment opportunities. He will forward the several letters of support or resolutions that have been done by others to the County. Commissioner Janssen stated she would like to see trains in the County. Renee Cunningham expressed concern regarding the trails for groomers. Louis stated he would have to look at plat books and easements. Craig Waddell stated he has concern with the train going through the City of Houghton, the bridge, and residents who live near where the railway would go by that may cause them to be unhappy. Chairman Tikkanen discussed the railway would get the weight off the roads. This will go on the next agenda.

**Public Comment-\*(3-minute limit):**

Clerk Kelly expressed concern regarding an employee and the Board not voting on his employment, pay or title. She also expressed concern about #5 on the agenda. Chairman Tikkanen interrupted Clerk Kelly and reprimanded her and Sara Huuki for their comments.

**Announcements:**

Commissioner Anderson discussed a Michigan Tech report for a 2<sup>nd</sup> bridge crossing. He discussed the Smart Zone. He stated MDOT is doing bidding for replacing some of the decks on the bridge and repainting the bridge in the future.

**Adjournment:**

A Motion was made by Commissioner Janssen and seconded by Commissioner Keranen to adjourn at 11:20 a.m.

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Tom Tikkanen, Chairman

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Jennifer Kelly, County Clerk

APPROVED \_\_\_\_\_

JK