HOUGHTON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
WORK SESSION
OCTOBER 5, 2026

The Houghton County Board of Commissioners held a Work Session on Monday, October 5, 2026 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 Vice Chairman Britz at 10:00 a.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 Chief Deputy County Clerk, Renee Cunningham:

District 2; Glenn Anderson, District 3; Gretchen Janssen, District 4: Roy Britz, District 5.

Absent: Tom Tikkanen, District 1

Zoom: Joel Keranen, District 2

Agenda/Additions:

No additions, continue as presented.

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

No Public comments.

Houghton County Board of Commissioners Work Session:

1. **Resolution in support of House Bill 610 (Lake level assessment funding reform)**

Administrator Rheault let the board know that she had given a copy of the Resolution to Nolan Miles the Drain Commissioner to review. Commissioner Anderson stated it makes sense to add the Resolution to next week's agenda for the Board Meeting. Commissioner Janssen and Commissioner Keranen also agreed to add the Resolution to the agenda.

2. **Resolution on Automated License Plate Readers (ALPRs)**

Commissioner Anderson stated that Houghton County does not have ALPRs in place at this time. He also stated that Sheriff Saarinen should be in the discussion about installing ALPRs in Houghton County. Katie LaCosse will be at the October Board Meeting to talk about ALPRs. Commissioner Anderson also talked about looking at other companies that have comparable systems and to make sure it is legal to put the ALPRs into place. Commissioner Britz added that Under Sheriff Giachino attended a presentation on using the License Plate Readers. Commissioner Keranen was also present in the presentation.

Commissioner Britz let the board know that he has issues with some of the language in the Resolution. Commissioner Anderson requested that the Resolution be put on the agenda and asked that the last paragraph on the Resolution be removed before next week's meeting.

Commissioner Janssen stated that she saw in the media that some individuals have stolen the readers in another county and that they now have access to the information that is collected with the readers.

3. **Resolution for Medical Examiner Contract (2023-2026)**

Administrator Rheault will add the Resolution to next week's board meeting agenda for the board to approve in the meeting. In the current contract with the Medical Examiner a vote was done in a past 2023 Board Meeting without a Resolution prepared. This Resolution will expire at the end of December and a new one will need to be drafted for 2027.

4. **2011 Public Act 152, The Publicly Funded Health Insurance Contribution Act**

Administrator Rheault stated that the Commissioners need to make a decision on what plans the County offers to the employees for 2027. This needs to be done before open enrollment can start. The County has paid a certain percent of the insurance for several years. For 2027 the increase renewal rate is 19.5%. Depending on what the County decides the employees could see up to a 10% increase in Insurance costs. Commissioner Anderson brought up that the Unions would need to be notified if the Hard Cap option is voted in by the Board.

Commissioner Anderson asked what Administrator Rheault recommends she stated that the Board needs to decide. She also stated the Board would need a 2/3's vote.

Commissioner Britz added that if there are any changes to the 2027 Insurance Plans the Unions need to be notified. Commissioner Anderson added that the county should continue past practice to split the increase of the insurance with the employees.

5. **Resolution of Support for State Legislative Action to Authorize a County Accommodation Tax on Hotels, Motels, Short-term Rentals and other Transient Lodging to Support County Programs, Services, and Infrastructure**

Commissioner Anderson started the discussion on the Resolution. It is not paying for the additional fees for services for the Sheriff department, Search and Rescue Services or any Ambulance fees. This would add a new tax to all the visitors to the County. Commissioner Janssen stated the additional expense is nominal, but we do not want to make the cost/tax too high with a result of the tourist choosing another area to vacation to save money.

After more discussion Commissioner Anderson and Keranen asked that the Board wait for a bill to be done at the State before the Board votes on the tax. Commissioner Britz and Janssen asked that the Resolution not be added to the agenda for the next Board meeting.

6. **Transfer Station**

Commissioner Keranen spoke about the issues that are ongoing at the Transfer Station that he is hearing from local contractors. The complaints are not about the employees, but about the ability to bring house waste to the transfer station. The Transfer Station is understaffed. He also stated that we need to get out of this business if we cannot serve our county. The Houghton County Road Commission pays its CDL drivers $25.00-$28.00 an hour and the CDL drivers for the Transfer Station make less.

Tom Bingham stated that the Transfer Station has certain days that the Contractors can bring in the house waste. The employees get overwhelmed with the amount of waste they need to take in. The Transfer station is currently short a driver to take the waste to Greenland.

Commissioner Keranen stated that we need to retain drivers. Need the right people working to keep damage to the equipment minimal. Commissioner Anderson asked that the pay rate be discussed at the next board meeting. Add to the agenda a discussion about reimbursing the Contractors that had to pay the new waste rates when they could not bring in waste last week at the old lower rate.

Commissioner Britz asked if we have enough equipment if the County hired some additional CDL drivers. Tom Bingham asked that we purchase a few new containers. Commissioner Keranen asked that the county pay the Transfer Station drivers the same pay as the Road Commission drivers.

Brendan Persnell from WUPPDR let the Commissioners know that he is working on training for drivers to obtain a CDL driver's license. Commissioner Britz stated that a current driver will be attending the training. Commissioner Anderson asked that Administrator Rheault add to the agenda for the Board to vote on a wage increase for the Transfer Station drivers.

Commissioner Janssen brought up Tom Bingham as the Interim Manager at the Transfer Station. The Personal Committee will be meeting on Tuesday to decide on Management at the Transfer Station. Commissioner Britz stated that the issues are not about the current employees working at the Transfer Station.

Other Business/Communications:

Commissioner Anderson asked Administrator Rheault to add the Health Department, and the County Wage increase to the agenda for the next Board Meeting.

Public Comments:

Todd Laroux, Building Department Manager, talked about a wage study done by Administrator Forsberg on the Transfer Station Drivers and drivers were underpaid back then. Todd talked about how hard the work is and that the driver's should be paid the National Average.

Commissioner Britz stated that the flow of the Transfer Station is not good anymore.

Brendan Persnell (WUPPDR) let the board know that he is currently working on analyzing the Transfer Station and hopes to be able to present his findings at the November Board Meeting. This would include expansion and additional costs.

Announcements:

None,

Adjournment:

A motion was made by Commissioner Anderson and seconded by Commissioner Janssen to adjourn at 11:00 a.m.

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Tom Tikkanen, Chairman Jennifer Kelly, County Clerk

APPROVED_____ JK