

**HOUGHTON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING
DECEMBER 13, 2022**

The Houghton County Board of Commissioners held a Regular Meeting on Tuesday, December 13, 2022 at 5:00 p.m. in the 5th Floor Conference Room of the Courthouse, City of Houghton and public viewing in person and by Zoom.

A. Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Tikkanen at 5:00 p.m.

B. Pledge of Allegiance:

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Chairman Tikkanen.

C. Roll call:

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

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

D. Approval of Minutes:

A Motion was made by Commissioner Janssen and seconded by Commissioner Britz to approve the November 15, 2022 minutes as presented.

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

E. Approval of Agenda/Additions:

Commissioner Britz asked to add K #10 to the Agenda for Airport Manager Salary.

Commissioner Anderson asked for recognition of Kevin Codere for Commissioner District 2 and Clerk Kelly's request for the Canvassers to receive a per diem and Charlie Markham to be paid mileage.

Administrator Bjorn asked for #12 to be added for mileage for Charlie Markham, and Clerk Kelly stated the Canvassers per diems needed to be approved also for the recount in Marquette.

Commissioner Codere asked to add J1-b for bathroom improvements.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Codere, seconded by Commissioner Anderson to approve the Agenda with the additions as presented.

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

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

Faith Morrison commented on her correspondence to the Board and requested the correspondence be included in the Commissioners packets that are online.

Barry Fink, League of Women Voters, read a letter opposing the FOIA from Teresa Kariniemi and felt it is an inappropriate use of taxpayer's money. The League of Women Voters commend all election workers.

John Haeussler thanked Commissioner Codere for his work on the Board, and recommended the Board reappoint Commissioner Anderson and James Hainault to the Land Bank Board. He also agreed with the League of Women Voters.

Erik Kiilunen commented on the voter rolls and the fraud in Wayne County. He stated he found 11 Helminen's that he is related to who left the Houghton County area and are still on the voter rolls. He suggested reviewing the voter rolls every 2 years. Has concerns about students who registered to vote that went to Michigan Tech.

William Keith stated the election workers are magnificent and he observed the Canvassing after the November 2022 election and it went smoothly. He stated he is against the County paying for the FOIA.

Bill Fink, Portage Township Trustee, discussed the 425 process for the Sharon Avenue property.

G. Approval of Bills:

A Motion was made by Commissioner Britz and seconded by Commissioner Janssen to approve paying the bills submitted of \$2,433,326.47.

The Motion carried by the following vote.

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

NO: None 0.

H. Correspondence:

Commissioner Britz discussed Alex Lehto-Clark's letter regarding the Fodermaier property in Stanton.

Chairman Tikkanen discussed a letter from Erik Kiilunen regarding a violation of the Health Code. Commissioner Anderson stated the Health Department Board authorized a public comment period effective December 1, 2022 for 30 days. They will vote in 2023. Notice was sent to all County Prosecuting Attorneys for their review.

Tonya Rule stated the Health Code is a UP wide County Proposal. It originally began in 2017, paused during the pandemic. Some revisions have been made to the Code. 6 Health Department in the UP have adopted the Health Code already. Biggest change to the County Code is for the Health Department to keep things locally. There will be a public hearing in January 2023.

Commissioner Britz stated the soil conditions are different here than downstate, and that is a driving factor.

I. Reports:

1. Standing Committee:

Commissioner Janssen reported to the Board on the following:

Recycling: There has been over 47.4 tons of recycling done so far this year.

UP Copper Festival-she attending the event with MI Works for 8-9 grade students. It is their goal to retain the students in the UP.

Commissioner Codere reported to the Board on the following:

County Clerk: He met with Clerk Kelly regarding the 2 Chief Deputy positions she is trying to implement according to MCL 53.91. He stated he believes the Personnel Committee will look into this.

Canal View: He stated Canal View is in need of employees, and discussed a 6-week training for CNA's.

Commissioner Anderson had nothing to report to the Board.

Commissioner Britz had nothing to report to the Board.

Chairman Tikkanen had nothing to report to the Board.

3. County Officers:

Dennis Hext, Airport Manager, stated the numbers for the Airport are good as of November 2022. The runway project has begun. Airfare currently has good rates.

Lisa Mattila, Treasurer, stated 3 out of the 8 properties have been demolished. The remaining 5 will be done in the spring.

Joshua Saaranen, Sheriff, stated they have had 3,000 complaints, and have 26 inmates. He stated the bodycams should be launching soon, and the mobil patrol vehicle will be going in next month to the shop.

Todd LaRoux, Building Department, discussed the new mailbox, and stated Tom Bingham has replaced all of the toilets in the courthouse.

Chris VanArsdale, Emergency Manager, did not have anything to report to the Board.

Jennifer Kelly, County Clerk/Register of Deeds, stated the recount in Marquette for the City of Houghton went great and both precincts were exactly perfect. She thanked Ann Vollrath and Jodi Reynolds for their hard work.

J. Old Business:

1. American Rescue Plan (CSLFRF) \$6.8 million

a. Sharon Avenue Property-Status Update

Commissioner Britz discussed the \$1,280,000 appraisal. There is a Purchase Agreement for \$1,200,000.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Britz, and seconded by Commissioner Codere to authorize Chairman Tikkanen to sign the Purchase Agreement to purchase the Sharon Avenue property.

The Motion carried by the following vote.

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

NO: None 0.

Commissioner Britz stated the closing should be done by December 31, 2022.

Commissioner Janssen discussed closing before knowing what is happening with the 425.

Bill Fink, Portage Township Trustee, stated the 425 is definitely a go and the Township Board supports and wants the Justice Center to happen. The 425 is for a 9 year period of time, and the jail is to go on the property or the property goes back to Portage Township.

Commissioner Codere congratulated Commissioners Britz and Janssen on their hard work. He discussed moving administrative offices to the property if the voters do not approve the jail.

b. Bathroom improvements

Commissioner Codere discussed refurbishing the 2nd and 3rd floor bathrooms as the private stalls are rusting out.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Codere, and seconded by Commissioner Anderson to pay \$10,000 out of the facility and courthouse budget to refurbish the 2nd and 3rd floor bathrooms.

The Motion carried by the following vote.

YES: Codere, Anderson, Tikkanen, Anderson, Janssen 5.

NO: None 0.

2. November 8, 2022 Election-Teresa Kariniemi; FOIA-11/29/2022 Request for Review of Election Records and Waiver of Fees

Administrator Bjorn explained that Osceola and Hancock Townships were missing, however, the estimates so far are around \$50,000.

Barbara Manninen asked what was going to be done with the data.

Teresa Kariniemi stated Election Integrity Force wants the information.

Faith Morrison stated there is no proof of wrong doing in Houghton County.

Erik Kiilunen stated the problem is in the voter rolls.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson and seconded by Commissioner Janssen to deny the FOIA finance request.

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

K. New Business:

1. Attorney Charles A. Lawler, Wayside Church, et al v. Van Buren County, et al;

Attorney Charles Lawler addressed the board via zoom. He asked to go into executive session. Chairman Tikkanen stated that was not happening, due to a busy Agenda. He stated a special session could be scheduled on January 17, 2023. Attorney Lawler discussed the various lawsuits. The Board agreed to go into Closed Session after the regular board meeting was finished.

2. Land Bank Authority Board Vacancies

The Board discussed 3 applicants. They were James Hainault, Glenn Anderson, and Mike Gaunt.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Janssen and seconded by Commissioner Codere to reappoint Glenn Anderson and James Hainault to 3 year terms on the Houghton County Land Bank.

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

3. Houghton County Planning Commission Board Appointments

A Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson, and seconded by Commissioner Britz to reappoint John Larson and Allan Aho to the Houghton County Planning Commission.

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

4. UP State Fair Authority Board Appointment

A Motion was made by Commissioner Britz and seconded by Commissioner Codere to reappoint Steve Palosaari to a 2 year term on the UP State Fair Authority Board.

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

5. 911 Committee First Responder Board Appointment

Josh Saaranen, Sheriff, stated there was 1 first responder, Dillan Malone who was interested and he recommended Dillan Malone be appointed to the 911 Committee.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Britz and seconded by Commissioner Anderson to appoint Dillan Malone to the 911 Committee

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

6. Karhu Cyber-November 2022 Cyber Security Report-(not subject to FOIA)

Chairman Tikkanen discussed the Report that is not subject to FOIA.

7. Remonumentation Program CY 2023

A Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson and seconded by Commissioner Janssen to accept the \$81,094.00 grant and authorize Chairman Tikkanen to sign.

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

8. Enterprise Funds Capital Investment Accounts

Commissioner Codere provided a handout to the Board for an analysis on the Transfer Station. He recommended an estimate of capital investment fund be implemented beginning in 2024 for \$2.1 million to be reinvested over the next 15 years. The operating of the Transfer Station should be self sustaining, however, the Board may need to increase user fees. He discussed a Proposal and Resolution beginning 2024 for \$150,000.

Administrator Bjorn suggested referring this to the auditors.

Commissioner Codere stated the recycling should go forward.

Chairman Tikkanen stated the Board should look at the income.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson and seconded by Commissioner Janssen to continue this discussion at the January 17, 2023 meeting and Commissioner Janssen to rewrite a Solid Waste plan.

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

9. Budget Amendments 1st Quarter 12/31/2022

Administrator Bjorn discussed the small amount totals in the Boards packets.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Britz and seconded by Commissioner Anderson to approve the Budget Amendments as presented.

The Motion carried by the following vote.

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

NO: None 0.

10. Airport Manager Salary

Commissioner Britz stated Dennis Hext has been at the Airport for more than 20 years and is a MP-10 position. He is recommending he go to a MP-11 position \$82,000. The funding will happen from the fees collected at the Airport.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Britz and seconded by Commissioner Anderson to have Dennis Hext moved to a MP-11 position at the rate of \$82,000 effective January 1, 2023.

The Motion carried by the following vote.

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

NO: None 0.

11. Canvassers mileage and per diem

A Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson and seconded by Commissioner Janssen to pay the Canvassers a full day per diem of \$75.00 and pay mileage to Charlie Markham for traveling to Marquette for the recount.

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

12. Appropriations

- a. Karhu Cyber-FY23-\$6,948.79
- b. UPEDA Membership CY2023 \$500.00
- c. Copper Country Mental Health-\$41,123.73

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

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

L. Public Comments: (5 minute limit)

Faith Morrison discussed the information discussed during the Board meeting that is not in the Board's packets online.

Administrator Bjorn stated anyone can come to her office to review the Board packets.

Tonya Rule stated the January public hearing will be at the Hancock office at 6:00 pm.

Next Board of Commissioners meeting is on January 17, 2023 at 4:00 pm

A Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson and seconded by Commissioner Janssen to go into closed session.

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

A Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson and seconded by Commissioner Britz to reopen the meeting at 7:33 pm.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson and seconded by Commissioner Britz to adopt the Resolution provided by Attorney Lawler to settle litigation.

The Motion carried by the following vote.

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

NO: None 0.

M. Announcements:

None.

N. Adjournment:

A Motion was made by Commissioner Codere and seconded by Commissioner Janssen to adjourn at 7:37 pm.

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

Tom Tikkanen, Chairman

Jennifer Kelly, County Clerk