

**HOUGHTON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING
JULY 18, 2023**

The Houghton County Board of Commissioners held a Regular Meeting on Tuesday, July 18, 2023 at 4:00 p.m. in the Conference Room on the 5th Floor 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 4:00 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance:

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Chairman Tikkanen.

Roll Call:

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

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

Approval of Minutes-June 13, 2023 Public Hearings & Regular Meeting:

A Motion was made by Commissioner Janssen and seconded by Commissioner Britz to approve the minutes of the June 13, 2023 minutes as presented.

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

Approval of Agenda:

A Motion was made by Commissioner Keranen and seconded by Commissioner Anderson to adopt the Agenda as presented.

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

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

None.

Approval of Bills -\$3,312,826.10:

A Motion was made by Commissioner Britz and seconded by Commissioner Keranen to approve paying the bills submitted of \$3,312,826.10.

The Motion carried by the following vote.

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

NO: None 0.

Correspondence:

None.

Reports:

Standing Committee:

Commissioner Keranen reported to the Board on the following:

Transfer Station: He stated the Transfer Station has been very busy. Curt Judson informed him they are up 100 tons this month and up about 500 tons from last year.

Commissioner Anderson reported to the Board on the following:

Recreation Authority-He discussed the 2 culverts being repaired from Sidnaw to Bergland (was shutdown), and 6 other culverts being repaired on the Bill Nichols Trail. He discussed the water main project in Adams Township and the culverts for a 2 mile stretch. There is 1 culvert to be completed on the Chassell-Houghton Trail. The bridge is out on the Baraga-Chassell Trail and is under repair (has been closed for 2 years). The Dollar Bay-Lake Linden Trail is about 40% completion, and the 5th contract will begin this fall. Douglas Houghton Falls project will be completed and is a \$2 million project.

He complimented Ben Larson and Jeff at the Marina for installing the security cameras and for the WIFI upgrades being done. He also congratulated Paul LaBine for becoming the new Houghton County Prosecuting Attorney.

The Village of Laurium will receive \$500,000. in enhancement grants.

Houghton County will receive a 7% increase in State Revenue sharing.

Commissioner Janssen reported to the Board on the following:

Recycling totals are down due to the Transfer Station not being able to fully accept recycling at this time.

BHK will be applying for a \$2.5 million grant to build a Community Center, and the deadline is the end of August 2023 to apply.

Commissioner Britz reported to the Board on the following:

Houghton County Road Commission-Total snowfall was 248.6" compared to 282.6" last year. He discussed the lawsuit filed by George Rajala and stated the complaint was dismissed with prejudice, but can Motion to Circuit Court for Reconsideration. Commissioner Britz stated Mr. Rajala stated he will appeal it.

Spring 2023 Flood: There was approximately \$14 million total damage.

Several local businesses made \$5,580 in donations for the Houghton County Sheriff Department to get stop sticks. Commissioner Britz thanked the following businesses: Copper Country Ford, Advance Auto Parts, Sayen's Auto Sales, Northern Heating and Plumbing, Keweenaw Power & Light, Lakeside Auto & Sales, UP Janitorial and Superior Service.

Mental Health: The Board was celebrating 60 years. The Board was invited to attend a celebration at the Rice Memorial Center on August 9th from 12:00-4:00 pm.

Chairman Tikkanen reported to the Board on the following:

Commissioner Keranen will attend the upcoming meeting with Chairman Tikkanen regarding the Spring 2023 flood damage.

County Officers:

Jennifer Kelly, County Clerk, advised the Board about the increase in numbers for people registering for the free Property Fraud Alert Program. She stated at her PRIA meeting in Marquette, she had learned that the scammers are now going after vacant land and vacation property homes. She discussed the upcoming elections in 2024 and the unknown changes due to the passing of Proposal 2.

Jaikob Djerf, Interim Equalization Director, stated Mike and Trent passed their MCAO test and are now at levels 2, and Jaikob is at level 3. On the GIS system there are 650 parcels remaining,

and 250-400 left to fix to be current to the 2022 tax roll. He is looking into sharing costs with the townships and cities. He stated that assessing reflects appropriately on the map.

Chris VanArsdale, Emergency Services Director, stated he was looking forward to the Thursday meeting with the Conservation district team.

Joshua Saaranen, Sheriff, stated there are 15-20 inmates and there have been 1450 complaints this year. He thanked the local businesses for their donations for the stop sticks. He stated Doug Hebner and Keith Raffaelli will be retiring and thanked them for their service to the Houghton County Sheriff Department. The jail has passed the inspection this year.

Todd LaRoux, Building Inspector, stated the construction in Houghton County is very busy. There have been 222 building permits have been issued and 65 new address numbers.

Chairman Tikkanen recognized Greg Markkanen and Tim Gasperich for attending the meeting.

Old Business:

1. ARP FUNDS

1. Voter Roll Updates

Commissioner Keranen suggested putting ARPA monies towards the voter rolls.

Clerk Kelly explained the process for cleaning up voter rolls and what she had done already regarding the reports she received from Erik Kiilunen.

Chairman Tikkanen stated a plan should be in place before any money can be agreed upon.

Commissioner Keranen will talk with Clerk Kelly.

New Business:

1. Torch Lake Federal Credit Union Building

Commissioner Janssen calculated the value of the building at a \$300,000 sales price and did a market analysis.

Sheriff Saaranen stated the new antennas should be going up around August 8th. The tower will come down after that in maybe September.

Chairman Tikkanen stated the Credit Union may be interested in purchasing the building. He suggested extending an offer to purchase the Credit Union in 30 days. The generator should stay with the building. The money from the sale would go to the 911 Board.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Keranen and seconded by Commissioner Anderson to extend an offer to the Torch Lake Federal Credit Union to purchase the building for \$300,000 and have 30 days to respond. The offer will include the generator, and the removal of the tower by Houghton County and to remove the concrete and bring the appearance back to normal.

Administrator Larson will contact the Credit Union, and Commissioner Janssen will assist him.

The Motion carried by the following vote.

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

NO: None. 0

2. Resolution 23-14 State Wide Septic System Tax & Required 5 Year Inspections Opposition

Commissioner Anderson stated the Health Department opposed the \$300 inspections and the 5 year required schedule for all septic systems in our area.

Greg Markkanen stated an individual could possibly be fined \$1,000 per month if they failed the inspection. He stated the local Health Department should have control. If the statewide septic system code were to pass, it would put a burden on the Health Departments and local government. He recommended the Board send a copy of the Resolution to the Speaker of the House and the Chair of the Agriculture Committee.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson and seconded by Commissioner Janssen to approve Resolution #23-14 as presented and send a copy to the Speaker of the House, Senate Majority Leader, and to the Chair, Majority Vice-Chair, Minority Vice-Chair and Committee Clerk on the Agriculture and Rural Development and Natural Resources Committee. The Motion carried by the following vote.

YES: Anderson, Janssen, Tikkanen, Keranen, Britz 5.
NO: None 0.



**Houghton County Board of Commissioners
401 E. Houghton Avenue
Houghton, MI 49931**

**Houghton County Board of Commission Resolution Opposing the Proposed
State Wide Septic System Code and Required Five Year Inspections
Resolution #23-14**

WHEREAS, currently there are pending in the Michigan Legislature four bills, Senate Bill 299 and 300, and House Bill 4479 and 4480, which would impose a statewide code and regulations for the implementation and maintenance of residential septic systems; and

WHEREAS, these bills, as currently drafted, require inspection of all septic system every five years, and would impose greater expenses to property owners and local public health departments; and

WHEREAS, the bills, if passed, would dramatically increase the requirements for septic inspectors, and make it much more difficult to find, hire and retain qualified personnel; and

WHEREAS, the current pending legislation does not provide a permanent, secure funding mechanism to cover these increased costs, which if passed will invariably be shifted to our local health departments; and

WHEREAS, the Houghton County Board of Commissioners recognizes the critical importance of protecting Michigan's water resources including groundwater, our lakes and streams, and other surface water, but concludes that the bills as presented do not provide a sustainable nor financially feasible solution for areas that do not have the benefit of municipal sanitary systems; and

WHEREAS, soil types vary considerably throughout the State of Michigan, making it difficult to establish laws and "one size fits all" rules for septic systems and a statewide code; and

WHEREAS, there are an estimated 4,455 septic systems operating in Houghton County, with minimal reports of operating problems; and

WHEREAS, the estimated cost to inspect septic systems is between \$300 and \$500, and adding this economic burden onto property owners with properly operating septic systems makes no sense.

THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this Resolution strongly opposing this legislation shall be forwarded to Baraga, Keweenaw, Ontonagon, and Gogebic Counties, to State Senator Edward McBroom, and State Representatives Gregory Markkanen and Jennifer Hill.

Moved by Commissioner:

Supported by Commissioner:

RESOLUTION DECLARED ADOPTED.

Tom Tikkanen, Chairman
Houghton County Board of Commission

Date

I, Jennifer Kelly, Clerk of Houghton County, do hereby certify and set my seal to the above Resolution as adopted July 18, 2023, at the Houghton County Courthouse, 401 East Houghton Avenue, Houghton, MI 49931.

Jennifer Kelly, Houghton County Clerk

3. Western UP Health Department 2023/2024 Appropriation Request \$272,324

A Motion was made by Commissioner Britz and seconded by Commissioner Janssen to approve the \$272,324 appropriation for the next year to the Western UP Health Department as presented.

The Motion carried by the following vote.

YES: Britz, Janssen, Tikkanen, Keranen, Anderson 5.
NO: None. 0

4. Copper Country Mental Health 2023/2024 Appropriation Request \$164,495

A Motion was made by Commissioner Britz and seconded by Commissioner Anderson to approve the \$164,495 appropriation for the next year to Copper Country Mental Health s presented.

The Motion carried by the following vote.

YES: Britz, Janssen, Tikkanen, Keranen, Anderson 5.
NO: None. 0

5. 911 Advisory Board Request-Fire Pagers

Commissioner Britz stated the 911 Advisory Board approved \$51,063 for 800 mega hertz pagers for the Village of Calumet and Laurium. Chris VanArsdale stated there have been issues in these areas.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Keranen and seconded by Commissioner Anderson to accept the 911 Advisory Board recommendation and approve \$51,063 for the 911 Fund to purchase the pagers for the Calumet and Laurium Village fire departments as presented.

The Motion carried by the following vote.

YES: Keranen, Anderson, Tikkanen, Janssen, Britz 5.
NO: None. 0

6. Opioid Settlement Funds Discussion

Commissioner Keranen stated he met with Keith Anderson and Judge Daavettila and suggested allocating the opioid funds to the Drug Treatment Court. Administrator Larson stated the County current has \$149,000 from the opioid litigation and more money will be coming for approximately 18 years. More funding for District Court will be considered.

Chairman Tikkanen discussed using money for possibly a mental health and drug treatment Center at the Sharon Avenue property.

Sheriff Saaranen discussed transportation to District Court vs. staying here.

Commissioner Anderson suggested a work session in September and to get suggestions from others.

7. Karhu Cyber June 2023 Cybersecurity Report (FOUO) not subject to FOIA

Chairman Tikkanen stated the Karhu report is not subject to FOIA that is in the Commissioner's packets.

8. Travel

- a. FOC Training \$1,400**
- b. Administrator MERS Conference \$455**

Motion was made by Commissioner Janssen and seconded by Commissioner Anderson to authorize the above-mentioned Travel requests as presented.

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

9. Appropriations:

- a. MSU Extension 4th Q--\$10,625.00**
- b. Western UP Health Department July-September-\$68,024.50**
- c. Karhu Cyber-\$14,783.75**

A & B-A Motion was made by Commissioner Janssen and seconded by Commissioner Keranen to approve letters a & b as presented.

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

c. Karhu Cyber-ARPA Funds \$14,783.75

A Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson and seconded by Commissioner Britz to approve the \$14,783.756 payment to Karhu Cyber with ARPA funds as presented.

The Motion carried by the following vote.

YES: Anderson, Britz, Tikkanen, Keranen, Janssen 5.
NO: None. 0

Public Comments:

Ken Cygan addressed the Board regarding the Property Fraud Alert Program.

Dan Holombo addressed the Board Septic Resolution.

Announcements:

Administrator Larson announced that Derek Morris will be the new Houghton County Friend of the Court.

Adjournment:

A Motion was made by Commissioner Keranen and seconded by Commissioner Anderson to adjourn at 5:42 p.m.

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

Tom Tikkanen, Chairman

Jennifer Kelly, County Clerk