

**HOUGHTON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
PUBLIC HEARING/SPECIAL MEETING  
SEPTEMBER 21, 2023**

The Houghton County Board of Commissioners held a Public Hearing/Special Meeting on Thursday, September 21, 2023 at 12:00 p.m. in the Conference Room on the 5<sup>th</sup> 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 12:00 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 Deputy County Clerk, Renee Cunningham:

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

**Public Hearing:**

A Motion was made by Commissioner Janssen and seconded by Commissioner Britz to open the Public Hearing.

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

Ben Larson let the Commissioners know that the current budget will be closing soon and should be in the black for the 2022/23 fiscal year. Becky Ylitalo let the Commissioners know that the 2023/24 budget looks good. There will be an increase in the fund balance with surplus.

Commissioner Anderson asked if the MERS payments are still on track. Becky Ylitalo responded that Houghton County is on track.

Ben Larson reminded the board that the Cyber Security Company, Karhu was paid by ARPA Funds. For fiscal year 2023/24, Karhu will be paid from the General Funds for \$57,000. MMRA will pay half of the money back to Houghton County.

For the fiscal year beginning October 1, 2023 to September 30, 2024, there is currently a \$7,000 surplus for this week, and there is \$11,319,135 in the General Fund. The total surplus for all funds is \$14,220,017.

Commissioner Anderson asked if the 911 Fund is separate from the Budget Report. Administrator Larson said yes it is.

Administrator Larson stated the current Prosecutor is leaving, and wished him well. The Prosecutor's Office has been seeking a Chief and an Assistant Prosecuting Attorney position for a while, and suggested maybe searching for 1 instead of 2, and increase the salaries for the Prosecutor and the Chief Assistant Prosecutor.

Commissioner Anderson asked if 1 additional support staff was hired by Brittany Bulleit and if she received higher wages for the support staff before she left that position. Becky Ylitalo said yes.

Administrator Larson stated a recommendation should be brought before the Board at the next meeting regarding the salaries of the Prosecuting Attorney, and a Chief Assistant Prosecuting Attorney Prosecuting Attorney's Office.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson and seconded by Commissioner Janssen to close the Public Hearing.

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

**Approval of Agenda/Additions:**

A Motion was made by Commissioner Janssen and seconded by Commissioner Britz to approve the Agenda as presented.

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

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

None.

**Correspondence:**

None.

**Reports:**

**Standing Committee:**

Chairman Tikkanen stated he supports Commissioner Anderson suggesting the Board adopt a new pay scale for the Prosecuting Attorney's Office.

**Old Business:**

None.

**New Business:**

**1. Houghton County Workcamp**

Administrator Larson stated the Workcamp has not been in use for over a year. There is no desire to fire Workcamp employees. He proposed to have the Sheriff open the Workcamp at moments Notice when it is needed.

Sheriff Saaranen thanked the Board. He acknowledged how well the POEM & AFSCME Unions worked together when the Workcamp was closed last year. Utilities have been brought down to minimal needs. He has a concern for the employees. He wants to ensure fair labor practice, and will need to open the Workcamp when Houghton County has more Prosecutors.

Commissioner Anderson asked if the AFSCME employees are still working. Sheriff stated yes and that he needs minimum staffing in the jail. Two Unions exist. Commissioner Anderson asked about job descriptions. Sheriff Saaranen stated there are no issues with job descriptions with the Unions.

Commissioner Janssen asked where the savings are. Administrator Larson stated no one wants to see Workcamp employees terminated, so they have been working at the Sheriff's Department. There is money in the fund to cover the Workcamp employees. Chairman Tikkanen stated the Workcamp will reopen when the time comes.

Commissioner Anderson asked when the Workcamp reopens, will the Sheriff Department be short on deputies. Sheriff Saaranen stated 4 additional deputies would be ideal. Commissioner Britz discussed looking at saving money, and to look after/protect those employees.

Sheriff Saaranen introduced Travis Dessellier as the new Captain at the Sheriff Department. He stated the Captain has lots of experience.

**2. Resolution 23-17 2023-2024 General Appropriations Act**

A Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson and seconded by Commissioner Janssen to approve Resolution #23-17 as presented.

The Motion carried by the following vote.

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

NO: None. 0

**COUNTY OF HOUGHTON  
GENERAL APPROPRIATIONS ACT  
OCTOBER 1, 2023 THROUGH SEPTEMBER 30, 2024  
Resolution #23-17**

A Resolution appropriating monies and adopting the 2023-2024 Houghton County Budget including: the General Fund Operating Budget, Special Revenue Fund Budgets and other Proprietary Fund Budgets.

It being the finding and opinion of the Houghton County Board of Commissioners:

The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration the taxes for the local units of government and the needs of various County departments/budgetary units.

The Committee of the Whole after considerable deliberations has recommended adoption of the budgets and reports attached and made a part of this Appropriations Act.

In recognition of the above-listed findings and opinion:

The Houghton County Board of Commissioners hereby resolves to adopt the attached 2023-2024 General Fund Operating Budget, Special Revenue Fund Budgets and other Proprietary Fund Budgets, and appropriate monies from various County revenues and equity reserves to authorize expenditures in accordance with the Account Group Detail of the various funds.

The Board further resolves that an appropriation is not a mandate to spend but shall limit the amount which may be spent for such purposes as are defined by the Board of Commissioners and which shall be limited to the fiscal year beginning October 1, 2023 and ending September 30, 2024. All Special Revenue fund balances at year-end are to be considered the initial allotment under the Appropriations Act for the new fiscal year. If a budgetary unit contends that part of its year-end fund balance is either obligated or otherwise restricted from being considered as an initial allotment of County monies under the new fiscal year appropriations, it will be incumbent upon that unit to demonstrate the obligation or restriction to the satisfaction of the County Board of Commissioners.

In recognition of the need to consider appropriation of monies from time to time to agencies or institutions outside of general operations the Board of Commissioners further resolves to review requests from such agencies when and as funds are available for such purposes. Any County Department, Agency, Board, Commission or unit whatsoever and any organization, public or private, which accepts a County appropriation shall do subject to an agreement which provides for inspection and/or audit by Houghton County Board or its designee. The Board, or its designee, shall have access for the purpose of audit and examination, to any and all books, documents, papers and records of the recipient organization.

The Board further resolves that the budget may be amended as conditions indicate upon the recommendation of the Finance Committee provided the budget remains in a balanced state. It further authorizes the County Administrator to make certain budget transfers in accordance with the Board's Budget transfer policy up to ten percent of departmental expenditures. In addition, the Board instructs the County Administrator to incorporate into the 2023-2024 departmental general fund budgets, wages and related fringe benefits for the County elected and appointed employees as authorized by the Board of Commissioners.

The Board further resolves that in administration of the adopted budgets, budgetary control shall reside at the most detailed level of budget adopted by the Board, i.e., department, program or activity. Unlimited transfers among line items without prior approval within the Supplies and Other Services and Charges account groups may be made by the Administrator/Department.

Moved by Commissioner:

Supported by Commissioner:

Roll Call Vote:

Yes:

No:

Motion Carried.

RESOLUTION DECLARED ADOPTED.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Tom Tikkanen, Chairman  
Houghton County Board of Commission

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

I, Jennifer Kelly, County Clerk of Houghton County, do hereby certify and set my seal to the above Resolution as adopted September 21, 2023, at the Houghton County Courthouse, 401 East Houghton Avenue, Houghton, MI 49931.

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

### **3. Resolution 23-18 Opposition of Any Legislation Preempting Local Control for Solar and Wind Developments**

A Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson and seconded by Commissioner Britz to approve Resolution 23-18 as presented.

The Motion carried by the following vote.

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

NO: None. 0

Commissioner Anderson suggested sending the Resolution to the Representatives as well as Jen Hill, the Governor, and to MAC. He has attending meetings at Adams Township for 3 years, and have talked about the difference reactions in the community with the changes of government office.

### **OPPOSITION OF ANY LEGISLATION PREEMPTING LOCAL CONTROL FOR SOLAR AND WIND DEVELOPMENTS RESOLUTION # 23-18**

**BE IT RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF HOUGHTON COUNTY,**

**Whereas** Executive Directive 2020-10 aims to achieve 100 percent carbon neutrality in Michigan by 2050; and

**Whereas** industry leaders have pledged to reduce carbon emissions to help achieve this goal; and

**Whereas** efforts to expand renewable energy projects will continue to increase in this state; and

**Whereas** the governor has proposed the Michigan Public Service Commission be the sole regulating authority for solar and wind projects to expedite these efforts; and

**Whereas** by granting the Michigan Public Service Commission this authority, local control will be preempted; and

**Whereas** should local control be preempted, a County, township, city or village would be unable to determine the location, size, setback distance, decibel level or any other criteria for a solar or wind facility; and

**Whereas** should local control be preempted, a County, township, city, or village would be unable to determine requirements for construction, operation, use, or maintenance of a solar or wind facility; and

**Whereas** if a County already has a solar or wind policy, practice, regulation, rule or ordinance on record it would be null and void; and

**Whereas** all other types of energy facilities, while regulated by the Michigan Public Service Commission, must adhere to local zoning; and

**Whereas** this proposal grants far more regulating authority to the Michigan Public Service Commission than for any other energy source; and

**Whereas** the Michigan Association of Counties opposes any legislative action that may grant the Michigan Public Service Commission this power.

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that HOUGHTON COUNTY** opposes the preemption of local control in solar and wind siting and zoning.

Moved by Commissioner:

Supported by Commissioner:

Roll Call Vote:

Yes:

No:

Motion Carried.

RESOLUTION DECLARED ADOPTED.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Tom Tikkanen, Chairman  
Houghton County Board of Commission

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

I, Jennifer Kelly, County Clerk of Houghton County, do hereby certify and set my seal to the above Resolution as adopted September 21, 2023, at the Houghton County Courthouse, 401 East Houghton Avenue, Houghton, MI 49931.

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Jennifer Kelly, Houghton County Clerk

**Public Comments:**

None.

**Announcements:**

Administrator Larson stated he met with Bruce Peterson, Portage Township Supervisor, and Eric Waara, City of Houghton Manager, regarding the Annex for the 6 acre parcel of land in the City of Houghton on Sharon Avenue. The Attorneys should have the Agreement ready for signatures soon.

Administrator Larson discussed the metal detector and security at the courthouse. There will be security eyes on all 3 doors, and 15 security eyes for various offices throughout the courthouse. In the coming weeks, the ID badges will open the doors for the employees.

Administrator Larson stated the new air conditioning unit is in place.

**Adjournment:**

A Motion was made by Commissioner Keranen and seconded by Commissioner Anderson to adjourn at 12:35 p.m.

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

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Tom Tikkanen, Chairman

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Jennifer Kelly, County Clerk