

**HOUGHTON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
PUBLIC HEARINGS & REGULAR MEETING  
FEBRUARY 11, 2025**

The Houghton County Board of Commissioners held two (2) Public Hearings & a Regular Meeting on Tuesday, February 11, 2025 at 4:00 p.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 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.

**Public Hearing-HCRLF Loan for Gabby's Guppies**

**a. Open Hearing**

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

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

**b. Discussion and Public Comment**

Sam Stonelake, Business Retention Specialist with KEDA, discussed the loan request from Gabby's Guppies, LLC for \$60,000 from the Houghton County RLF. It will be a loan for 43 childcare slots and will employ 10 people. It will be located in the old Hancock High School building. This was approved by the Revolving Loan Fund Committee.

**c. Close Hearing**

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

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

**Public Hearing-CDBG for Quincy MFG**

**a. Open Hearing**

A Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson and seconded by Commissioner Janssen to open the meeting.

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

**b. Discussion and Public Comment**

Sam Stonelake, Business Retention Specialist with KEDA, discussed the close out loan of \$70,000 for Quincy MFG that is located at the Airpark. They have manufactured 300-500 skateboards and have gone from 5 employees to 13, and hope to hire more soon.

**c. Close Hearing**

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

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

**Approval of Minutes January 30, 2025 Special Meeting:**

A Motion was made by Commissioner Keranen and seconded by Commissioner Janssen to approve the minutes of the January 30, 2025 Special meeting as presented.

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

**Approval of Agenda/Additions:**

Chairman Tikkanen requested adding #6 for changing the meeting time of the monthly Board meetings.

Commissioner Britz requested adding #7 for non-budgeted money for the Sheriff Department body armor for the deputies.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Keranen and seconded by Commissioner Britz to accept the agenda as presented with the two (2) additions.

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

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

Sarah Green addressed the Board stating she supports Gabby's Guppies.

Frank Fiala addressed the Board stating he supports Gabby's Guppies.

**Approval of Bills:**

A Motion was made by Commissioner Keranen and seconded by Commissioner Britz to approve paying the bills submitted of \$2,002,440.09.

The Motion carried by the following vote.

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

NO: None 0.

Correspondence:

None.

Reports:

**Standing Committee:**

Commissioner Keranen reported to the Board on the following:

He thanked everyone who helped and is helping the Village of Laurium due to the fire that happened.

Commissioner Janssen discussed the Revolving Loan Fund on the agenda, and recognized that it is black history month.

Commissioner Anderson reported to the Board on the following:

Houghton County Recreation Authority.

Jeff Kerklook from the DNR will be retiring.

Trails: The engineering is close to being done on the Freda grade trail. They will find funding. Chassell Township will be a non-motorized trail sponsor. The Bill Nichols Trail: there will be new decks and railings on the 3 bridges this summer. There may be some closures during this time.

The Twin Lake State Park will be closed this summer to update the bathrooms.

Houghton Douglas Falls: They started the parking lot last year and should be complete this year.

Commissioner Britz reported to the Board on the following:

HCRC: The December snow total was 72.3” and the January snow total was 99.3”.

Sheriff Department: Will be discussed later in the agenda.

**County Officers:**

Christ VanArsdale, Emergency Measurers Director, he stated he has been assisting the Village of Laurium with finding things they need and looking into grant funding.

Sheriff Saaranen stated the Pigs N Heat game was a success. They raised \$15,000-16,000.

There are approximately 22 inmates, and have averaged in the 20’s the past month.

He discussed the Law Board meeting. The Sheriff Department should be fully staffed soon. He may have 2 individuals to go to the Academy, but right now only 1 is for sure.

Todd LaRoux, Building Inspector, stated he will be doing a walk through with 2 contracts on Wednesday for the back up generator. He will also do a walk through at the Marina on February 19<sup>th</sup> for the ADA Bathrooms.

Teresa Hill, HR Manager, discussed the wage study. She is going over the job descriptions to make sure things match for the company that is doing the wage study.

Dennis Hext, Airport Manager, discussed the terminal. He applied for a 3<sup>rd</sup> flight grant and was approved. This will be for June, July and August. He applied for another 3<sup>rd</sup> flight grant for September and October 2025 and August 2026. He applied for a grant for 6 box hangers. The Charter for Riverside has been sold out. He stated there were 730 flights last year and 31 were canceled. That is about 4% of flights which is a low percentage. They have about a 75.9% loading factor, with 53,050 passengers in 20024.

**Old Business:**

None.

**New Business:**

**1. Resolution #25-02 HCRLF Loan for Gabby’s Guppies**

Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson and seconded by Commissioner Janssen to approve Resolution #25-02 as presented for Gabby’s Guppies 10 year loan at 7%.

The Motion carried by the following vote.

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

NO: None. 0

**HOUGHTON COUNTY**

**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT LOAN  
PROGRAM (CLP)  
AUTHORIZING RESOLUTION  
#25-02**

The following is a copy of a resolution adopted by the Houghton County Board of Trustees during the regular County Board Meeting held at 4:00 p.m. on Tuesday February 11, 2025, on the 5th floor of the Houghton County Courthouse, 401 East Houghton Avenue, Houghton, MI 49931.

**WHEREAS**, assisting the startup, expansion, or location of companies that create new jobs is a priority for Houghton County; and,

**WHEREAS**, the proposed Gabby’s Guppies, LLC will assist the creation of new childcare jobs in the County; and,

**WHEREAS**, the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) offers loans for assisting companies with working capital, machinery and equipment as well as building renovations; and

**WHEREAS**, Houghton County has requested Community Development Block Grant Loan Program funding authorization in the amount of \$60,000 from the MEDC; and,

**WHEREAS**, the proposed project is consistent with the local community development plan as described in the application and that at least 51% of the beneficiaries of the proposed project would be low and moderate income persons; and,

**WHEREAS**, no project costs will be incurred prior to a formal loan award, completion of the environmental review procedures and a formal, written authorization to incur costs is received from the MEDC.

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Houghton County Board of Commissioners authorizes submission of a CDBG Application in the amount of \$60,000 for Gabby’s Guppies, LLC project.

**FURTHER, BE IT RESOLVED** that Lisa Mattila, County Treasurer, is authorized to execute the application form and attachments on behalf of the County, sign the Loan agreement, and serve as the certifying officer for the environmental review.

Upon a call of the roll, the vote was as follows:

Moved by Commissioner:

Supported by Commissioner:

Roll Call Vote:

Yes:

No:

Motion Carried.

**RESOLUTION DECLARED ADOPTED.**

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

I, Jennifer Kelly, Clerk of Houghton County, do hereby certify and set my seal to the above resolution as adopted February 11, 2025, at the Houghton County Courthouse, 401 East Houghton Avenue, Houghton, MI 49931.

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Jennifer Kelly, Clerk

## **2. Recreation Authority Appointment**

Commissioner Anderson stated he was appointed last month for a 3 year term and Commissioner Keranen would be the alternate. Upon review of the Bylaws, if there are an even number of people, the County needs to have two (2) people on the Recreation Authority unless another municipality joins.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson and seconded by Commissioner Britz to appoint Commissioner Keranen to a three (3) year term on the Recreation Authority as a second representative.

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

## **3. Michigan 2-1-1 Community Organization Portal Invitation**

Chris VanArsdale stated Houghton County has 2-1-1 already and isn't sure why they are reaching out to have Houghton County join. Chris will look into this.

## **4. Travel**

None.

## **5. Appropriations:**

- a. WUPPDR- \$3,717.75**
- b. KEDA Annual Membership -\$20,000.00**
- c. Western UP Health Department-\$68,960.00**
- d. Northwoods Rail Transit Commission Annual Fee- \$400.00**

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.

## **6. Change meeting time for monthly Board meetings**

Chairman Tikkanen discussed changing the time to 3:00 p.m.

Motion was made by Commissioner Britz and seconded by Commissioner Keranen to change the start time of the monthly Board meetings to 3:00 p.m.

The Motion carried by a voice vote. Ayes 4, Nays 1.

## **7. Body Armor for Sheriff Department Deputies**

Commissioner Britz stated the Law Enforcement Board approved the quote for \$24,585 that expires on February 16, 2025. This would be for all field service deputies per Sheriff Saaranen. This is a non-budget request. The Federal grant programs do not cover this type of purchase.

Motion was made by Commissioner Britz and seconded by Commissioner Keranen to approve the quote for \$24,585 for the body armor for the Sheriff Department Deputies.

The Motion carried by the following vote.

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

NO: None. 0

**Public Comments:**

Brian Irizarry addressed the Board regarding the Airport Identifier being changed to Houghton/Hancock. Dennis Hext, Airport Manager, stated that the Airport has always had Hancock listed as that is the closest City. This is a requirement of the FAA.

Frank Fiala addressed the Board regarding the responsibilities of elected officials.

**Announcements:**

None.

**Adjournment:**

A Motion was made by Commissioner Keranen and seconded by Commissioner Anderson to adjourn at 5:03 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