

**HOUGHTON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
REGULAR MEETING  
MAY 13, 2025**

The Houghton County Board of Commissioners held a Regular Meeting on Tuesday, May 13, 2025 at 10:00 a.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 10:00 a.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: April 8, 2025-Regular Meeting, April 15, 2025-Special Meeting, May 5, 2025-Work Session:**

A Motion was made by Commissioner Britz and seconded by Commissioner Anderson to approve the minutes from April 8, 2025, Regular Meeting; April 15, 2025, Special Meeting and the May 5, 2025, Work Session as presented.

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

**Approval of Agenda/Additions:**

Commissioner Anderson requested adding #8-Set Truth In Taxation Hearing date for the June meeting; add #9-Tri County Public Defenders status on a check in the amount of \$103,717.79; and add #10-Tri County Public Defenders-Request to review/receive invoices from 2018 to present.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson and seconded by Commissioner Janssen to accept the agenda as presented with the three (3) additions.

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

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

Nikki Jollimore, District Court Administrator/Magistrate, read a letter to the Board from Judge Nicholas Daavettila regarding his support for the Tri County Public Defenders.

Brittany Bulleit, Circuit Judge, supports Judge Daavettila's letter and stated her concerns for Circuit Court if the Tri County Public Defender's are not working with her Court.

Caron Harrington, Attorney at Tri County Public Defender's Office, expressed his concerns for his job.

Ann Harris, Administrator with Tri County Public Defender's Office, stated that anyone is welcome to look at their books/records at the Tri County Public Defender's Office.

David Gemignani, Attorney with Tri County Public Defender's Office, stated their office has tried to resolve this matter since December 2024. He apologized for his comments on Microsoft Teams. He stated in 2018, the County paid about \$20%, now the County pays 10%. This

decrease is because of how busy they are. He believes the problem is an accounting error. He stated he wants to work this out with the County.

**Approval of Bills-\$4,001,751.01:**

A Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson and seconded by Commissioner Keranen to approve paying the bills submitted of \$4,001,751.01 as presented.

The Motion carried by the following vote.

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

NO: None 0.

**Correspondence:**

None.

**Reports:**

**Standing Committee:**

Commissioner Keranen had nothing to report to the Board.

Commissioner Janssen reported to the Board on the following:

She attended the UPCAP Conference and discussed the importance of Medicaid in the U.P. and stated approximately 61% of adults work who are on Medicaid. She attended the UPCP Executive Board meeting and discussed the possibility of the loss of Medicaid.

Commissioner Anderson had nothing to report to the Board.

Commissioner Britz reported to the Board on the following:

Road Commission-snow total of 315.8", they are waiting on \$1.99 million from FEMA. The State will be installing a traffic light on M-26 and the Canal Road this summer. It will hopefully be completed by the end of June 2025.

During a planning meeting, he stated there is high fire danger.

**County Officers:**

Clerk/Register Kelly stated her report is in the Board's packet, and she attended the UPCAP Conference.

Judge Bulleit stated she would discuss her report at the Judge's quarterly meeting on Friday.

**Old Business:**

None.

**New Business:**

**1. Motion of Appreciation: John Pekkala, Drain Commissioner, 17 years**

Chairman Tikkanen congratulated John Pekkala on his 17 years of service with Houghton County.

Motion was made by Commissioner Keranen and seconded by Commissioner Anderson to do a Motion of Appreciate for John Pekkala.

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

## **2. Millage Projections**

Commissioner Anderson discussed the jail bond and stated the Board needed to decide on 20, 25, 30 years for a 60 bed facility for \$29.5 million. For 10 extra beds it would be an additional \$1.3 million, and for 20 extra beds it would be an extra \$2.4 million. This would bring the total to either \$31 million or \$33 million. This would be a millage of 1.6, 1.65, or 1.7.

Chairman Tikkanen discussed the Sheriff's recommendation of 70 beds.

Vice-Chairman Britz stated the Jail Committee recommended 70 beds.

Commissioner Anderson discussed the 10 extra beds would be an increase of .5 mills. It would be a millage of 1.6 mills for 30 years for 70 beds. There would be no penalty for the County prepaying money after 10 years.

## **3. Agenda Approval Policy**

Commissioner Keranen stated that he is not in favor of the Agenda Approval Policy as the Agenda should not be decided by the Administrator and Chairman as the entire Board makes decisions.

Chairman Tikkanen disagreed as he feels this new Policy would make things more transparent.

Motion was made by Commissioner Keranen and seconded by Commissioner Anderson to adopt the Agenda Approval Policy with removing the Administrator from the Policy from making the decisions. The Chairman will make the decisions.

The Motion carried by the following vote.

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

NO: None. 0

## **4. Generator Purchase**

Commissioner Keranen discussed the quotes the County received. He stated Carl's Electric Service was the low bid of \$53,520.00. The generator would be used for IT and communications.

Motion was made by Commissioner Keranen and seconded by Commissioner Britz to pay \$53,520 to Carl's Electric Service with ARPA money for a new generator for IT and communications as presented.

The Motion carried by the following vote.

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

NO: None. 0

## **5. Varnum Engagement Letter**

Commissioner Anderson stated this should be tabled until the Special Meeting at the end of May as the Tri County Public Defenders are cooperating. He commented on the County waiting for 4 months for requested information per the auditors.

Administrator Rheault stated legal counsel would not be needed if the invoices were able to be viewed.

Attorney David Gemignani stated the Board can come and view the invoices.

Motion was made by Commission Anderson and seconded by Commissioner Janssen to table the engagement letter until the Special meeting the last week of May 2025 pending the County

receiving copies of the invoices from fiscal year 2018 to present from the Tri County Public Defenders by the end of the close of business day May 16, 2025.

The Motion carried by the following vote.

YES: Anderson, Janssen, Tikkanen, Britz 4.

NO: Keranen 1.

## **6. Approval of Ballot Date(s):**

### **a. Canal View (Renewal)**

Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson and seconded by Commissioner Britz to approve the Canal View ballot language for 2.1 mills for the August 5, 2025 ballot as presented.

The Motion carried by the following vote.

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

NO: None 0.

### **b. Meals on Wheels: Elder Nutrition**

Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson and seconded by Commissioner Janssen to approve the Elder Nutrition ballot language for 1 mill for the August 5, 2025 ballot as presented.

The Motion carried by the following vote.

YES: Anderson, Janssen, Tikkanen, Britz 4.

NO: Keranen 1.

### **c. Houghton County Justice Center**

Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson and seconded by Commissioner Janssen to approve Resolution #25-007 for the Houghton County Justice Center going on the August 5, 2025 ballot for 1.60 mills for 30 years for \$32 million as presented.

The Motion carried by the following vote.

YES: Anderson, Janssen, Tikkanen, Britz 4.

NO: Keranen 1.

## **7. Passport Camera Purchase Request**

Motion was made by Commissioner Britz and seconded by Commissioner Keranen to approve the purchase of a new passport camera system for the County Clerk's Office \$2,635.39 as presented.

The Motion carried by the following vote.

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

NO: None 0

## **8. Set Truth In Taxation Hearing to be held during the June meeting**

Motion was made by Commissioner Keranen and seconded by Commissioner Anderson to have the Truth in Taxation Hearing during the June 2025 Regular meeting and be on the Agenda.

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

## **9. Tri County Public Defenders Status on a check in the amount of \$103,717.79**

Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson and seconded by Commissioner Janssen to table this discussion until the Special Meeting at the end of May 2025.

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

#### **10. Tri County Public Defenders-Request invoices from 2018 to present**

Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson and seconded by Commissioner Janssen to table this discussion until the Special Meeting at the end of May 2025.

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

#### **11. Travel**

##### **a. Delaney Ruotsala-July 31, 2025 CER Examination**

Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson and seconded by Commissioner Keranen to approve the above-mentioned travel as presented.

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

#### **12. Appropriations:**

##### **a. CCMH Monthly Appropriation-\$13,707.91**

Motion was made by Commissioner Britz and seconded by Commissioner Keranen to approve the amended Appropriate of \$27,415.82 for CCMH as presented.

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

#### **Public Comments \*(3 minute limit)::**

Nichole Jollimore, District Court/Magistrate, expressed her concerns about having legal defense for people going through District Court. Concerned about back logging the docket, rescheduling, possible violations for inmates, and requested better communication.

David Gemignani stated his office will turn over anything the Board requests.

Ann Harris stated she will email Administrator Rheault and the entire Board all requested invoices.

Kevin Store thanked the Board for putting the Senior Meals millage on the ballot.

Judge Bulleit stated she has concerns if there are attorneys for inmates, and asked for better communication.

Sarah Green discussed issues on the federal level, and the jail and attorney issues.

Faith Morrison discussed the Agenda request form.

#### **Announcements:**

Clerk Kelly stated that VC3 notified her in an email that they cannot help with the Circuit Court Jury line and requested help making sure upcoming trial notifications that jurors are told to call will be put on the jury line or for the County to purchase an answering machine.

#### **Adjournment:**

A Motion was made by Commissioner Keranen and seconded by Commissioner Anderson to adjourn at 11:13 a.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