HOUGHTON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING
NOVEMBER 10, 2026

The Houghton County Board of Commissioners held a Regular Meeting on Tuesday, November 10, 2026 at 6:00 p.m. in the 3rd Floor Circuit Courtroom of the Courthouse, City of Houghton with the public viewing in person and by Zoom.

Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Tikkanen at 6:00 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 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 the Minutes: October 13, 2026, Regular Meeting; November 2, 2026 Work Session

A Motion was made by Commissioner Janssen and seconded by Commissioner Britz to approve the minutes from the October 13, 2026 Regular Meeting and the Work Session held on November 2, 2026 as presented.

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

Approval of Agenda:

Commissioner Britz asked that J #11 be added to the agenda to discuss the jail roof.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Britz and seconded by Commissioner Anderson to approve the agenda with the one (1) addition as presented.

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

Public Comments:

Teresa Kariniemi, Republican Party, read a letter supporting the sale of the Sharon Avenue property.

Approval of the Bills $6,392,125.39:

A Motion was made by Commissioner Keranen and seconded by Commissioner Anderson to approve the bills in the amount of $6,392,125.39 as presented.

The Motion carried by the following vote.

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

REPORTS:

Standing Committees:

Commissioner Keranen read the following statement:

“He who has ears let him hear”

Last I checked we all
have ears on this board and it’s time we use those ears and listen to the people of Houghton County. For the last 4 years I have been in the minority on how we should pay for a jail. I quietly just voted no on most jail votes. However, it is now abundantly clear I am not in the minority with the people of Houghton county.

I will state once again that I am in favor of building a new jail. The reason I was voting no was because I did not want to burden our citizens with yet another tax. The majority of this board had ample opportunity to advance their plan to pay for a jail, but for the 5th time the people said NO. Now 4 of the 5 commissioners find themselves in the minority vs. the people of Houghton County.

I understand you may not like what the electorate said, but it’s time that we figure out how to listen to the people.

There is a reason God gave us 2 ears and 1 mouth.

Another ballot initiative?
Insanity! If we put this back to a vote for a 6th time, we will redefine insanity. The new definition of insanity will be “ the Houghton county board of commissioners putting a jail tax back on the ballot and expecting it to pass” .

At last month’s board of commissioners meeting Chairman Tikkanen stated,

“We will see what the people have to say” .

They said no, and the vote was a more resounding no vote than the previous ask.

Another thing the people are saying, if we are listening, is they don’t like what was done to acquire the Sharon ave property. All you have to do is spend just a few moments looking at media reports and people’s comments regarding the purchase. They are saying we didnt give them a voice on the property purchase, and they are correct. This board put the cart in front of the horse when it came to the Sharon ave property. We put our fingers on the jail scale. We tried to grease the jail skids. That plan has backfired. The scare tactics and pressure applied to our citizens to vote for what the majority of this board was proposing has not worked.

The Chairman also stated that “the Sharon ave property was bought at no cost to the taxpayers of Houghton county”. But that was a false statement. The hardworking people of Houghton county pay federal taxes, and that is precisely where the money came from. The county does not have the money in our budget to run 2 county buildings. (I would be willing to bet we would be the only county of the 83 counties in michigan to have 2 county buildings to maintain and pay for). If we move county offices to Sharon Ave., we double all of our utilities, snow removal and maintenance etc… So when the hardworking courthouse employees come looking for a raise, they won’t find it, because it’s been spent on a building on Sharon Ave.

To further prove this point, 2 months ago this board was ready to borrow $1,000,000 from the building department to upgrade the Sharon Ave. property. Why were we going to borrow that money from the building department? Well because we didn’t have the money, and we couldn’t afford to spend it from the general fund. It was ultimately deemed illegal to do this. So that never came to fruition.

I am a pragmatic person and try to solve problems. I have stated numerous times that I only see 3 ways to pay for a jail .

1Tax
2 gifts
3 cash

Clearly, the only way the board agrees with is…tax. We have pursued it 5 times! The only problem is, the voters of Houghton county don't agree.

The gift option is actually a reasonable ask. If you wish to donate to a jail, we can and will accept your donations. I would tell the people of the county who voted for the millage to start sending their checks in. Put your money where your vote was. Or maybe we can get Copper Shores to share some of the approximately $90 million they have. After all, they are taking about $1.25 million dollars a year from the tax payers of Houghton County. So maybe they could pay it forward.

The last option is to pay cash. I understand this county does not have that much money laying around to pay for a jail. But we do have the equivalent in property.
I also know it was stated by our chairman that " the sale of county property was thoroughly discussed".

I can speak to that and say that is not true. I say that because I chaired this committee. Before I even had one committee meeting, 4 of my fellow commissioners told me they are not in favor of selling county assets to pay for a jail. Furthermore, 2 of the commissioners voted against even getting an appraisal done. So the fix and the votes were in before we ever had a single committee meeting. I refused to waste people's time on discussing something whose outcome was already decided.

As I have stated numerous times, we are required to own and operate a jail. We are not required to collect garbage, launch boats or operate a nursing home. We have these 3 businesses because we choose to. So we MUST prioritize a jail over a transfer station, marina or nursing home. It's time to seriously look for another way to pay for a new jail, or then continue to live with a crummy, outdated and insufficient jail.

Put up or shut up!

What we need to do next is sell the Sharon Ave. property. Then put that money from the sale into the jail fund. We must lower the cost for a new jail and focus our jail building on our current campus right here next to the current courthouse. If I recall we bought property 30 + years ago to build a jail on the former Houghton high school site. I see that hasn't gotten very far.

I have talked to our Prosecutor about his thoughts on a jail and they make good sense to me. The main idea is to renovate and expand our current campus while preserving the historical aspects of our courthouse.

I plan to introduce as an agenda item next month to form a new jail committee. One that consists of the 5 commissioners, the sheriff, the prosecutor, the judge and some community leaders. We owe it to the people of Houghton county to listen to what the ballot box told us last week, and for the past 20 years. If we chose not to do that, it wouldn't surprise me. After all there is a reason the public has such disdain for politicians. I am fearful there will be another jail tax on the ballot in the near future. Perhaps when we think we can sneak it through when people aren't paying attention. If that happens, I will not remain quiet, and I believe the citizens of Houghton county will join me to once again to defeat this insanity.

Commissioner Janssen thanked Clerk Kelly and the workers for their hard work during the November election. She also thanked Faith Morrison for all of her hard work. She feels the voters clearly do not support the police.

Commissioner Anderson talked about the customers receiving the cheaper rate at the Transfer Station the week of October 1st.concerns with the current jail and the need for a new jail.

Houghton County Recreation Authority: The Twin Lakes Park has reopened and the McLain's electrical issues have been redone. He discussed the visitors at the Houghton Douglas Falls, and a $2 million project for overlooking the falls.

DNR: He discussed the Copper Heritage Trail and stated public meetings will begin in the spring.

WUPPDR: Discussed the Summit and the 116 housing tips.

Jail: Thanked the committees and others. He stated if the County sold the property, they would have to pay the money back to the federal treasury.

Commissioner Britz thanked everyone for their work on the jail project. He is disappointed.

Commissioner Tikkanen thanked Clerk Kelly and the Early Voting Center workers. He also thanked the community and welcomes public communication regarding the Sharon Avenue property.

Special Committees:

None.

County Officers:

Casey Polkinghorne, Airport Manager, gave the following report:

-Enplanements and deplanement numbers are both above last year for the first time this calendar year. Last year was a record-breaking year for the airport and we have been holding slightly behind last year so far until October.

-New parking system that began in September continues to do well while we make slight improvements in coordination with Xeratec. Monthly program fees are much simpler and less than the old system. Without any additional revenues, which we expect, the initial startup fees will be paid off in ten months.

-New box hangar is nearing completion and should be ready for occupancy on December 1st.

Todd LaRoux, Building Department Manager, addressed the Board and gave his monthly report.

Single Point Entry:

- Guessing construction will start in March or April 2027.

He stated the construction on the old Portage Hospitals housing units are beautiful and they are working on the third floor now.

Jennifer Kelly, County Clerk, gave the following report:

- Early Voting went smoothly and the workers assisted 1,945 voters. There were no major lines and stated that was because of the large space that was available for set up.

Unfinished Business

1. **Resolution #2026-31 In Support of House Bill #6105, Lake Level Assessment Funding Reform**

A Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson and seconded by Commissioner Janssen to adopt Resolution #2026-31 as presented.

The Motion carried by the following vote.

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

COUNTY OF HOUGHTON
RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL #6105 (LAKE LEVEL ASSESSMENT FUNDING REFORM)
RESOLUTION #2026-31

WHEREAS, Houghton County administers lake level special assessment districts under Part 307 of the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act; and

WHEREAS, the State of Michigan, through the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), is responsible for paying its proportional share of lake level assessments for state-owned lands; and

WHEREAS, the current Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) formula does not provide sufficient funding for the State's required lake level obligations, resulting in repeated shortfalls that shift costs onto local taxpayers; and

WHEREAS, counties across Michigan have raised concerns that the State's underpayment creates an unfunded mandate and places an unfair financial burden on local lake level districts; and

WHEREAS, House Bill 6105, sponsored by Representative Kunse, would correct his inequity by ensuring the State fully funds its statutory lake level responsibilities; and

WHEREAS, the Michigan Association of Counties (MAC) has identified HB 6105 as a priority fix needed to protect county budgets and prevent local taxpayers from subsidizing State obligations;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Houghton County Board of Commissioners hereby expresses its full support for House Bill 6105 and urges the Michigan Legislature to enact this corrective legislation without delay; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that copies of this resolution shall be transmitted to Representative Dave Prestin, Senator Ed McBroom, the Michigan Association of Counties, and the Governor's Office; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Houghton County encourages swift legislative action to ensure fair, predictable, and fully funded lake level assessments for all Michigan counties.

Moved by Commissioner:
Supported by Commissioner:

Roll Call Vote:
Yes:
No:

Absent: None.

Motion Carried.

RESOLUTION DECLARED ADOPTED.

_____ _____

Thomas Tikkanen, Chairman Date
Houghton County Board of Commissioners

I, Jennifer Kelly, County Clerk of Houghton County, do hereby certify and set my seal to the above Resolution as adopted November 10, 2026, at the Houghton County Courthouse, 401 East Houghton Avenue, Houghton, MI 49931.

_____

Jennifer Kelly
Houghton County Clerk

New Business:

1. **Jaikob Djerf, Amended Apportionment Report**

Jaikob Djerf discussed the needed changes in the Apportionment Report due to the millage passing for the Hancock Area District Library.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Janssen and seconded by Commissioner Britz to adopt the amended Apportionment Report as presented.

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

2. **Sharon Avenue Property**

Commissioner Keranen asked how many counties have more than one building and asked Administrator Rheault to look into it. He questions if the county can afford to operate two (2) facilities. Commissioner Britz stated Baraga County has three (3). Commissioner Janssen discussed having to move the MSU Extension Office out of the HOCO Arena.

3. **Resolution #2026-32 POAM Collective Bargaining Agreement**

Administrator Rheault feels comfortable with the proposal with the rate increases over the next three (3) years. She stated she also included two (2) fulltime employees for the single point of entry.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Britz and seconded by Commissioner Janssen to adopt Resolution #2026-32 as presented.

The Motion carried by the following vote.

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

Resolution # 26-32
RESOLUTION ADOPTING COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENT
BETWEEN
THE COUNTY OF HOUGHTON AND THE HOUGHTON COUNTY SHERIFF

AND THE
HOUGHTON COUNTY DEPUTY SHERIFF'S ASSOCIATION
AFFILIATED WITH THE
POLICE OFFICERS ASSOCIATION OF MICHIGAN

WHEREAS the Houghton County Deputy Sheriff's Association affiliated with the Police Officers Association of Michigan (POAM) is recognized by the Michigan Employment Relations Commission and the County of Houghton as the exclusive representative of certain employees of the Houghton County Sheriff's Office.

AND WHEREAS, the parties have bargained mutually acceptable terms and conditions.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, pursuant to the recommendation made to the Board of Commissioners, the County resolves that the Tentative Agreement amending the collective bargaining agreement for the period October 1, 2026 – September 20, 2029, is hereby approved. It is further authorized that the Board Chairperson is authorized to take all necessary administrative actions to implement this resolution.

Moved by Commissioner:

Supported by Commissioner:

Roll Cal Vote:
Yes:
No:

Motion carried.

RESOLUTION DECLARED ADOPTED.

_____ _____
Thomas Tikkanen, Chairman Date
Houghton County Board of Commissioners

I, Jennifer Kelly, County Clerk of the County of Houghton, do hereby certify and set my seal to the above resolution as adopted November 10, 2026, at the Houghton County Courthouse, 401 East Houghton Street, Houghton, Michigan.

_____
Jennifer Kelly, County Clerk

4. **Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Appeal-Deemed Denial for Request Dated October 5, 2026; Douglas Hebner**

Chairman Tikkanen stated the county has received two (2) opinions. One from the Treasurer's Attorney and another from the County Attorney, Roger Zappa. Attorney Zappa recommended a Resolution be done by the Commissioners.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson and seconded by Commissioner Britz to adopt Resolution #2026-34 as presented.

The Motion carried by the following vote.

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

HOUGHTON COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

401 E. Houghton Avenue, Houghton, Michigan 49931
Telephone: (906) 482-8307

RESOLUTION ADOPTING FINDINGS AND DETERMINATIONS IN FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT APPEAL
RESOLUTION NUMBER #26-34

WHEREAS, the Houghton County Board of Commissioners has received and considered a Freedom of Information Act appeal by Douglas J. Hebner relating to certain Houghton County property tax records.

NOW, THEREFORE, IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED, that the Houghton County Board of Commissioners adopts the Findings and Determinations attached to this Resolution as Exhibit A, affirming the underlying decision being appealed; and

IT IS FURTHER RESOLVED, that Tom Tikkanen, Chair of the Houghton County Board of Commissioners is authorized to sign the Findings and Determinations on behalf of the Houghton County Board of Commissioners.

Motion made By: Commissioner Anderson

Motion Supported By: Commissioner Britz

Roll Call Vote:

AYES: Anderson, Britz, Tikkanen, Keranen, Janssen (5)
NAYS: None (0)

Motion Carried.

RESOLUTION DECLARED ADOPTED.

_____ _____
Thomas Tikkanen, Chairman Date
Houghton County Board of Commissioners

STATE OF MICHIGAN)
)ss
COUNTY OF HOUGHTON)

I hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and complete copy of a Resolution adopted by the County of Houghton, Michigan, at a meeting of the Board of Commissioners on the 10th Day of November, 2026, the original of which Resolution is on file in my office. I further certify that the meeting was held, and the minutes therefor were filed in compliance with Act No. 267 of the Public Acts of 1976.

_____
Jennifer Kelly, Houghton County Clerk

5. UP State Fair Board Appointment

A Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson and seconded by Commissioner Britz to appoint Jan Strieter to a two (2) year term effective January 1, 2027 on the UP State Fair Board.

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

6. **Benefit E Cola Defined Benefit**

Administrator Rheault discussed the 2.5% amount since 2014.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson and seconded by Commissioner Janssen to approve the one (1) year COLA at 2% for the Sheriff Department's Defined Benefits as presented.

The Motion carried by a voice vote. Ayes 4, Nays 0. Britz abstained.

7. **Road Commission Board Appointment**

A Motion was made by Commissioner Keranen and seconded by Commissioner Britz to reappoint William Siler to the Houghton County Road Commission Board.

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

8. **Appointment of Deputy Magistrate**

A Motion was made by Commissioner Janssen and seconded by Commissioner Keranen to approve the appointment of Tamara Robertson as the Deputy Magistrate for 97th District Court.

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

9. **Tri-County Public Defenders October Reimbursement-$85,155.62**

A Motion was made by Commissioner Janssen and seconded by Commissioner Anderson to approve the $85,155.62 to the Tri-County Public Defenders as presented.

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

10. **Formally Dissolve Jail Committee(s)**

A Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson and seconded by Commissioner to dissolve the Jail Committee(s).

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

11. **Jail Roof**

Commissioner Britz stated the roof has been leaking for 15 years and there is more leaks now. Traverse Engineering will provide an estimate. Todd LaRoux stated he received the 2023 drawings, and recommends finalizing the drawings as there are 44 holes in the roof. Commissioner Britz recommended John Paul Pietila looking at the roof structure and Commissioner Britz hopes the water has not caused more damage.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Britz and seconded by Commissioner Anderson to have Traverse Engineering look at the roof on the jail and provide a quote to the county. Todd LaRoux is authorized to get a quote.

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

Travel:

1. **Brian Kangas, IAEI Conference; 12/2/2026-12/04/2026.**

A Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson and seconded by Commissioner Janssen to approve Brian Kangas attending the IAEI Conference as presented.

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

Appropriations:

1. **Western Upper Peninsula Health Department-Quarterly Appropriation, $69,106.50**
2. **Western Upper Peninsula Planning & Development Region, 1st Qtr Member Contribution, $3,717.75**

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

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

Public Comments:

Faith Morrison discussed the opioid settlement funds.
George Eakin discussed the jail and the Early Voting Center.

Announcements:

None.

Adjournment:

A Motion was made by Commissioner Keranen and seconded by Commissioner Anderson to adjourn at 7:10 p.m.

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

_____ _____

Tom Tikkanen, Chairman Jennifer Kelly, County Clerk

APPROVED _____ JK