

**HOUGHTON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
SPECIAL MEETING/COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
MARCH 8, 2022**

The Houghton County Board of Commissioners held a Special Meeting/Committee of the Whole on Tuesday, March 8, 2022 at 1:00 p.m. in the 5th Floor Conference Room of the Courthouse, City of Houghton and public viewing by Zoom.

Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Albert Koskela at 1:00 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance:

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Chairman Koskela.

Roll call:

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

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

Approval of Minutes:

The Board decided to not address the February 15, 2022 minutes and would wait for the next Board meeting to review them.

Approval of Agenda/Additions:

A Motion was made by Commissioner Tikkanen, 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.

New Business:

1. Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (CSLFR)

Houghton County Land Bank: Lisa Mattila, Treasurer, discussed the need for demolition funds. Currently there are six (6) parcels in need of demolition. Treasurer Mattila stated it would cost approximately \$350,000-\$400,000 for the demolition. She reminded the Board to keep the handout she had provided to the Board in mind. The demolition is necessary to take the buildings down due to hazardous conditions, and parts of the buildings falling onto the streets. The Land Bank currently has a little under \$37,000 in revenue.

Commissioner Tikkanen asked if the Land Bank can approach Calumet Township and the two (2) Villages to partner with the County regarding the cost of demolitions. Treasurer Mattila said she will contact them.

Treasurer Mattila stated that the Erkkila property has a gas and oil smell, and complaints are received during the summer months.

Commissioner Britz asked Treasurer Mattila if she was looking for 100% of the costs for the demolition. Commissioner Anderson said yes, due to both villages having little money, but may wish to use the ARPA monies. Commissioner Koskela asked if the parcels can be given away. Treasurer Mattila said yes, and they have tried, however no one wants the parcels.

Commissioner Tikkanen discussed hazardous sites. Blight removal funds could come from other sources.

The 6 Parcels have been in the County's ownership for 4-6 years per Treasurer Mattila. March 31, 2022 is the next foreclosure. The Erkkila parcel has a Brownfield Redevelopment Assessment Report showing hazardous material.

Treasurer Office: Treasurer Mattila requested the following:

1. A wage study.
2. New desks.
3. Carpeting.

Airport: Dennis Hext, Manager, requested the following:

1. A new terminal. Cost would be a local share match. Cost=\$3 million (\$15 million project).
2. The water and sewer lines need to be replaced. Cost=\$100,000-\$200,00.
3. The 500-gallon water tank needs to be replaced (10-5 years left-lead based paint). Cost =\$1.1 million.
4. The sewer system needs the clay pipes replaced. Cost =\$300,00-\$500,000.
5. There are problems with the PFAS. He discussed a \$8 million runway project in 2023. The County pays the contamination costs.
6. The sewer system currently goes to Torch Lake Township (County share \$200,000). There is discussion for it to go to Paavola (\$1.5 million). The cost for an on-site system is approximately \$1 million.

Elizabeth Bjorn, Administrator, explained this is an informal meeting, and the information has been out there for months.

Commissioner Anderson discussed the infrastructure bill, the ARPA funds, and to use the bill, and not the discretionary funds.

Commissioner Tikkanen stated the County is cooperating regarding PFAS with EGLE.

Manager Hext wanted it documented that the County and Airport did nothing wrong regarding the PFAS.

Commissioner Anderson asked when the water system was installed. Manager Hext stated 1972.

Probate/Family Court: Tracey Beauchamp, Administrator, requested the following:

1. An updated video conferencing and case management program (JAVS Program). Cost=\$42,000.
2. Carpeting=\$26,000.

Sheriff Department: Joshua Saaranen, Sheriff, stated they would like the following:

1. UPSET position. An undercover detective car. Cost=\$25,000 with a trade in of the current car.

2. Radios operated through the Sheriff Department for all schools in Houghton County. Cost=\$110,000.
They would like to do monthly radio checks, however, some radios are not working. Commissioner Britz stated there should be 2-4 radios per school depending on the size of the school.
3. Body cameras. Cost=\$20,000-\$30,000.
4. Replacement of the door on the Huron Street primary entrance. Cost=\$8,000-\$10,000.

Elizabeth Bjorn, Administrator, stated regarding the body cams there is grant money to reimburse the County up to 50% by MMRA insurance. Cybersecurity group will be doing a presentation to the Board.

Commissioner Tikkanen discussed the grant Jack Dueweke did years ago and asked if that could be looked into.

Houghton County Road Commission: Kevin Harju, County Engineer, discussed the two (2) sided handout he provided to the Board. He discussed establishing a road repair matching fund with the townships for the ARPA monies. Calumet Township has agreed to use \$180,000 of their ARPA monies if the County matches with the Road Commission doing the prep work. A1 mile road costs approximately \$300,000 to reconstruct. Kevin Harju suggested there be a deadline for the townships to commit to the matching fund program. There are currently 10 out of 14 townships who have road millages. Kevin discussed an informational flyer being sent to the townships, and have the townships respond as to what amount of the ARPA funds the township would contribute.

Drain Commission: John Pekkala, Drain Commissioner, discussed storm water drains. We currently do not have a County drainage district in Houghton County. He stated money could be put in a fund for future storm water drains. A startup cost would be needed, and then the cities and townships may proceed.

Commissioner Janssen requested the department heads turn in a written request with what money they are requesting.

Elizabeth Bjorn, Administrator, discussed the following:

1. Replacement of the air conditioner for the 3rd, 4th, and 5th floors.
Cost=\$200,000-\$300,000.
2. Cybersecurity and courthouse security: Tom Ressler, IT, discussed security, and infrastructure not being adequate. Cost=\$15,000-\$50,000.
3. Natural growth-work from home-enhanced security and controls.
Cost=\$40,000-\$100,000.
4. Administrator Bjorn discussed the department heads putting a portion of cybersecurity in their annual budgets in the future.
5. Tom Ressler stated he would need about \$150,000 for current needs.

Emergency Measures: Chris VanArsdale, Director, requested the following:

1. Radios-signal boosters for Hospitals. Cost=\$250,000
2. School radios. Cost=\$70,000/each
3. Spill response trailer for hazmat spills. Cost=\$30,000
4. Repair fire extraction equipment. Cost=\$100,000
5. Rescue Team equipment. Cost=\$20,000
6. Radio dispatch at Houghton County Sheriff Department. Cost=\$100,000
7. JIS software System-emergency response. Cost=\$80,000
8. Mobil command center. Cost=\$1.7 million
9. All hazard response boat-Mobil pumper. Cost=\$1.9 million
10. Mine shaft safety-cost unknown
11. Generators for shelters. Cost=\$200,000
12. 911: Fire & First Responder Radio replacements-60 radios. Cost=\$300,000

Transfer Station: Curt Judson, Manager, requested the following:

1. Safety cameras for the outside of the buildings. Cost=\$5,000.
2. Upgrade 1 new truck, and 1 new trailer. Cost=\$250,000.

3. Lighting on interior of the shop-LED. Cost=\$6,000-\$8,000.
4. He discussed hazard pay for the staff who worked through COVID.

District Court/Magistrate Office: Niki Jollimore, Magistrate, stated Judge Daavettila will provide the Board with a written proposal. She discussed employee pay along with security upgrades for the building and District Court offices.

Commissioner Tikkanen stated this was not the sole meeting for the Board and department heads.

Prosecuting Attorney: Brittany Bulleit, Prosecutor, reserved her request to request funds. She stated she is in need of another Prosecutor (2nd Assistant) as they are understaffed, and an additional support staff worker.

Maintenance: Tom Bingham, Maintenance Manager, discussed big rocks pushing through under the parking deck. New black topping. The dormers in the front of the building are falling, discussed LED lights in all of the building, a plow truck, and the seams needing to be fixed on the parking deck.

County Clerk Office/Register of Deeds: Jennifer Kelly, County Clerk/Register of Deeds, requested security and countertops be put in both offices.

Commissioner Anderson discussed the five (5) patrol cars that the Board previously approved with ARPA funds. He asked Administrator Bjorn if she had the numbers on what has been spent on COVID the last 2 years. Administrator Bjorn will get that information to the Board. Commissioner Anderson stated he would like to see how many townships would participate in the program Kevin Harju discussed. He requested Administrator Bjorn get a cost estimate for a wage study. He discussed department heads put their requests in writing, and hold a public hearing for the public to make suggestions.

Commissioner Janssen discussed getting reports from representatives from Mental Health, BHK, and the Health Department to see what needs they may have.

Commissioner Britz discussed the purchase of the jail property.

Commissioner Tikkanen discussed the department heads prioritizing their lists. Department heads are to provide Administrator Bjorn a list of their requests before March 15, 2022 if possible. It will be put on the Agenda for the March Board meeting. Departments heads should make a side note for Administrator Bjorn if there are other grants or funding that they could apply for.

Public Comments: (5-minute limit)

None.

Announcements:

None.

Adjournment:

A Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson and seconded by Commissioner Britz to adjourn at 2:55 pm.

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

Albert Koskela, Chairman

Jennifer Kelly, County Clerk