

**HOUGHTON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
PUBLIC HEARING & REGULAR MEETING  
MAY 9, 2023**

The Houghton County Board of Commissioners held a Public Hearing and Regular Meeting on Tuesday, May 9, 2023 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 Zoom.

**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-CDBG Housing Grant Closeout MSC-2014-0739-HO:**

a. Open Hearing

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

b. Discussion and Public Comment

Mary Ellen Hyttinen from WUPPDR stated the hearing was necessary to close out the Grant that ended in 2018. The grant was for any kind of homeowner repairs. There is currently one (1) open grant.

c. Close Hearing

A Motion was made by Commissioner Keranen and seconded by Commissioner Britz to close the Public Hearing.

**Approval of Minutes April 11, 2023 Regular Meeting:**

A Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson and seconded by Commissioner Janssen to approve the minutes of the April 11, 2023 minutes as presented.

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

**Approval of Agenda:**

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

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

**Public Comments:**

None.

**Approval of Bills -\$1,292,071.90:**

A Motion was made by Commissioner Keranen and seconded by Commissioner Janssen to approve paying the bills submitted of \$1,292,071.90.

The Motion carried by the following vote.

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

NO: None 0.

**Correspondence:**

None.

**Reports:**

**Standing Committee:**

Commissioner Janssen reported to the Board on the following:

She attended the MAC Conference in Lansing and visited the Emmett County Transfer Station to see their recycling operations as a guest. She then talked about the Houghton County Transfer Station and stated that we have had recycling numbers of 4.75 tons as of April 2023 compared to 3.78 in April 2022.

Commissioner Britz reported to the Board on the following:

Houghton County Road Commission: As of March 2023, cumulative snowfall totals for the year were 226.3”.

911 Advisory Board: Two VHF antennas have failed, one at the Donken site and one at the Houghton site. New antennas have been purchased, and the State (MMPSCS) tower climbers will be fixing the antennas and cabling if it is determined to be faulty this week. A subcommittee has been established and is looking into purchasing additional radios for fire departments and first responders based on their current needs. This subcommittee will also investigate the long-term viability of the current radio fleet and make recommendation to the full 911 Board on radio expected life and a replacement plan.

Commissioner Britz brought the Board up to date on the tower at the former 911 building in Laurium. The tower is approximately 150’ and after the transition of the VHF equipment to the Centennial Heights tower, the existing tower at the 911 building will not be needed. Jon Giachino, Under Sheriff/911 Coordinator, has been in contact with potential contractors, and has received 2 quotes to remove the tower from the Laurium property. The first quote is for \$22,600 to scrap the tower. The second quote is for \$30,000 to take it down in pieces and possibly sell the tower.

North Care: Megan Rooney is the Interim CEO. High Schools can put in requests for money for their non-alcoholic graduation parties. The money may not be received until next year, but interested high schools can submit requests now to North Care.

Stanton Township: He discussed Stanton Township wanting to purchase the car pool lot near the Stanton Township Office. He advised the Township to talk to the Road Commission, as the Road Commissions owns that property.

Commissioner Anderson reported to the Board on the following:

He thanked Chairman Tikkanen and Chris VanArsdale for all of their hard work on the April flooding in Lake Linden. The Governor approved the State of Emergency for Houghton County on Friday, and Glenn remarked on how quickly that happened as it usually takes much longer.

Commissioner Keranen reported to the Board on the following:

He attended the MAC Conference in Lansing. He discussed complaints he has received on the roads in Houghton County, and then talked about his interest to continue to work with the Road Commissioner to serve our taxpayers.

Chairman Tikkanen reported to the Board on the following:

He stated the fire site on 5<sup>th</sup> Street in Calumet has been cleaned up. The Houghton County Land Bank is holding 2 parcels involved in the fire, and they have hired a concept design company, and that the County will pay for the redesign with emergency grant funds.

### **County Officers:**

Dennis Hext, Airport Manager, stated the runway project will begin around May 15<sup>th</sup>. The terminal project study and planning has also begun. The Sun Country Charter from Laughlin has returned and a full flight of passengers were happy to see it return. Flight passenger numbers are up 13% from this time in 2022.

Under Sheriff Giachino stated there have been 192 calls of service for the month, and currently there are 25 inmates in the County Jail. There have been 3 felony arrests and 16 misdemeanor arrests.

Chris VanArsdale, Direct of the Office of Emergency Measures, stated that the County is still in the initial damages assessment phase of the incident. Due to the series of weather events (rain/snow, etc.) Immediately following two 70-degree days causing snow melt, this process has take significantly longer than the usual 72-hour window that we would normally be allowed. We are trying to get these initial damage inventories for public damage completed by the end of the week. For individual damage, individuals can call 211 to report damages or use the online self-reporting site. 17 people have self-reported damages so far. Once this initial damage assessment is complete, the State of Michigan (EMHSD) will come to verify our damage numbers. If the 7 impacted counties collectively reach the damage threshold (approximately \$18 million), then the State will request a Presidential Disaster Declaration under the Stafford Act. If granted, then FEMA will potentially cover 75% of repairs, and the applying agency/municipality would be responsible for the remaining 25%. In the 2018 Flood, this 25% was covered by the State through a special appropriation. It would be VanArsdale's recommendation that our elected officials contact our State Legislators to request this same type of assistance for this instance if we are granted the Presidential Declaration. Any municipality that has not filed for damages from the 2023 flooding should contact VanArsdale as quickly as possible if they have not already done so. If we are successful in applying for the Declaration, then the County can fall back on Section 19 funding (Section 19 of Public Act 390 of 1976) which is based on the population of the impacted communities. Based on Houghton County's population, we would be eligible for \$500,000. The local municipalities would also be eligible for funding from Section 19 as well, but that would be based on their populations. The amounts would not be sufficient on any level to cover the costs that are being reported for damage. The FEMA Public Assistance program is a reimbursement program, meaning applying agencies/municipalities would need to have the money to spend to complete their projects, and then get reimbursed at a later date. Cash flow has been and could be a problem, and this can be a long and paperwork intensive process. VanArsdale reminded all that we are just finishing the 2018 Flood work this year.

### **Old Business:**

None.

### **New Business:**

#### **1. County Drain Presentation**

Chariman Tikkanen met with the Drain Commissioner (John Pekkala), the Administrator (Ben Larson) Local Engineers Dick Sipina and John Paul Pietila from Traverse Engineers, and the Emergency Management Director (Chris VanArsdale) to discuss long-term flood prevention and to consider the current flooding emergency. Chris VanArsdale discussed that in order to move forward, the big questions will be: who is going to maintain these drainage ways all along M-26 and other areas in the County, and second who is going to pay for such maintenance. In the

recovery from the 2018 flood, the MDEQ (now EGLE) spent a significant amount of money to clean out these drainage ways, but they have not been maintained since then. In the spring of 2019 there was a meeting of the municipalities and fire departments in the damages areas to discuss the short and longer term maintenance of the affected area. At that time, the County Board Chair, the Administrator and the Emergency Management Coordinator wrote the municipalities a letter stating the position of the County was that these drainage ways were the responsibility of the local municipality. If the municipality wanted the County to be responsible for their maintenance, then the municipality could Petition the County to create a County Drain, and follow the procedures outlined in the Michigan State Drain Code. Once created, the County Drain Commissioner would then be responsible for maintaining the Drain. The process usually involves creating a Drainage District, hiring an Engineer to map the drain, and devising a plan of maintenance and other improvements to mitigate against the control flooding. Commissioner added that this usually results in a Special Assessment District where residents who have property that contributes to storm/melt runoff, and residents that benefit from the improvements and maintenance are both assessed to generate money for the improvements and maintenance. VanArsdale stated that such a Drain District would be eligible for future funding, including sources such as the FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grant Program. Chairman Tikkanen and VanArsdale further discussed concerns about the current situation where some drainage ways are maintained, which other appear not to be. VanArsdale stated that one of the questions FEMA will ask about the current flood is if any of the damage is in relation to what was paid for by FEMA back in 2018. If so, the infrastructure must have maintenance records showing it was in good/reasonable working condition prior to this 2023 flooding. If not properly maintained, we could be in danger of losing future funding from FEMA. VanArsdale reminded everyone that establishment of a County Drain would result in residents paying for maintenance, but that the costs of such maintenance would be much less than what is currently happening. The current cycle of damage occurring, there is little to no assistance for private property, and many residents do not have flood insurance. The establishment of County Drains would mitigate the damage and could eliminate it. Another thought is to create larger districts with multiple drains, as this would further spread the costs of maintenance and projects out among many people, reducing the individual burdens. Chairman Tikkanen reiterated the importance for the County and the municipalities to be proactive moving forward in the future to prevent these flooding events and the resulting damage and potential loss of lives. Residents or municipalities that are interested should contact the Drain Commissioner, John Pekkala. John is happy to visit with any village or township to discuss Drain Districts, and he is happy to make a presentation at any meeting on the process of setting up County Drains.

## **2. Marriage License Fee Increase**

Clerk Kelly requested to the Board to increase the rate for performing weddings from \$25.00 to \$50.00. Commissioner Janssen asked how many weddings Clerk Kelly performs. Clerk Kelly stated that each year she performs approximately 50, and that she also travels to perform the weddings when requested.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson and seconded by Commissioner Britz to increase the wedding ceremony fee to \$50.00 effective June 1, 2023.

The Motion carried by the following vote.

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

NO: None. 0

## **3. PFC Deficit Elimination Plan Amended Resolution #23-05**

A Motion was made by Commissioner Keranen and seconded by Commissioner Janssen to approve the PFC Deficit Elimination Plan Amended Resolution #23-05 as presented.

The Motion carried by the following vote.

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

NO: None. 0

# **HOUGHTON COUNTY**

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

**Chairperson**  
Tom Tikkanen  
**Vice Chairperson**  
Roy Britz

**Commissioners**  
Glenn Anderson  
Gretchen Janssen  
Joel Keranen

**HOUGHTON COUNTY PASSENGER FACILITY CHARGE FUND  
RESOLUTION TO REDUCE UNRESTRICTED NET ASSET BALANCE  
RESOLUTION #23-5 (Amended)**

WHEREAS, the Houghton County Passenger Facility Charge Fund has a deficit balance of unrestricted net assets as of September 30, 2022; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to MCL 141.921, any local unit of government ending its fiscal year with a deficit net asset balance must file a deficit elimination plan with the Michigan Department of Treasury; and

WHEREAS, failure to submit a deficit elimination plan and receive Department of Treasury approval for such plan could result in a reduction of State revenue Sharing; and

WHEREAS, the timing of PFC monies are collected and expensed, as directed by the Federal Aviation Administration, dictate that the Fund will always have a deficit balance of unrestricted net assets; and

WHEREAS, the activity currently being posted to the PFC Fund was previously reported in the Airport Fund but was split out for internal accounting purposes only; and

WHEREAS, the resulting deficit balance in unrestricted net assets is an internal accounting number only.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Houghton County Board of Commissioners recognize that the PFC Fund will be in a perpetual state of deficit balance.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Houghton County Board of Commissioners approve the projected budget for the years ending September 30, 2023, 2024, 2025, 2026 and 2027 for the Houghton County Passenger Facility Charge Fund.

Motion made by Commissioner Keranen and seconded by Commissioner Janssen

AYES: Keranen, Janssen, Tikkanen, Anderson, Britz (5).

NAYS: None (0).

RESOLUTION DECLARED ADOPTED.

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

STATE OF MICHIGAN        )  
  )ss.  
COUNTY OF HOUGHTON    )

I, the undersigned, the duly qualified and acting County Clerk of the County of Houghton, State of Michigan do hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and complete copy of a resolution adopted by the County Board of the County of Houghton at its Regular meeting held on the 9<sup>th</sup> day of May 2023, the original of which resolution is on file in my office.

**IN WITNESS WHEREOF**, I have hereunto set my official signature, this 9<sup>th</sup> Day of May, 2023.

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

**4. SWT Enterprise Fund Deficit Elimination Plan Amended Resolution #23-06**

Administrator Larson stated a change was made to paragraph #4 in the Resolution. An increase is necessary to eliminate the deficit.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson and seconded by Commissioner Janssen to approve the SWT Enterprise Fund Deficit Elimination Plan Amended Resolution #23-06 as presented.

The Motion carried by the following vote.

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

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Joel Keranen

**HOUGHTON COUNTY SOLID WASTE TRANSFER STATION  
PROPRIETARY ENTERPRISE FUND  
RESOLUTION TO REDUCE UNRESTRICTED NET ASSET BALANCE  
RESOLUTION #23-6 (Amended)**

WHEREAS, the Houghton County Solid Waste Transfer Enterprise Fund has a deficit balance of unrestricted net assets as of September 30, 2022; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to MCL 141.921, any local unit of government ending its fiscal year with a deficit net asset balance must file a deficit elimination plan with the Michigan Department of Treasury; and

WHEREAS, failure to submit a deficit elimination plan and receive Department of Treasury approval for such plan could result in a reduction of State revenue Sharing; and

WHEREAS, an increase of 9% of charges for services effective 1 May 2023; an additional increase of 1.5% for charges for services effective 1 October 2023, 2024, 2025, 2026 & 2027, which shall cause an increase in operating revenue and an increase of net assets; and WHEREAS, a decrease of contractual and repair and maintenance expenses will cause a decrease in operating expenditures and a decrease of liabilities; and

WHEREAS, the resulting deficit balance in unrestricted net assets will be corrected to satisfy the budgetary requirements of the State of Michigan, Department of the Treasury

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Houghton County Board of Commissioners recognize that actions resulting in increases in revenue or decreases in operating expenses is warranted for this proprietary fund; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Houghton County Board of Commissioners approve the projected and updated budgetary changes for the year ending September 30, 2023, 2024, 2025, 2026 and 2027 for the Houghton County Solid Waste Transfer enterprise Fund.

Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson and seconded by Commissioner Janssen.

AYES: Anderson, Janssen, Tikkanen, Keranen, Britz (5).

NAYS: None (0).

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

RESOLUTION DECLARED ADOPTED.

STATE OF MICHIGAN        )  
  )ss.  
COUNTY OF HOUGHTON    )

I, the undersigned, the duly qualified and acting County Clerk of the County of Houghton, State of Michigan do hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and complete copy of a resolution adopted by the County Board of the County of Houghton at its Regular meeting held on the 9th day of May 2023, the original of which resolution is on file in my office.

**IN WITNESS WHEREOF**, I have hereunto set my official signature, this 9th Day of May, 2023.

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

**5. Treatment Court Deficit Elimination Plan Amended Resolution #23-06**

Administrator Larson stated the amended Resolution was necessary to clear the deficit in Treatment Court.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Keranen and seconded by Commissioner Britz to approve the Treatment Court Deficit Elimination Plan Amended Resolution #23-06 as presented.

The Motion carried by the following vote.

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

NO: None. 0

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**HOUGHTON COUNTY TREATMENT COURT (DRUG COURT)  
SPECIAL REVENUE FUND  
RESOLUTION TO REDUCE UNRESTRICTED NET ASSET BALANCE  
RESOLUTION #23-7 (Amended)**

WHEREAS, the Houghton County Treatment Court; Nonmajor Government Fund has a deficit balance of unrestricted net assets as of September 30, 2022; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to MCL 141.921, any local unit of government ending its fiscal year with a deficit net asset balance must file a deficit elimination plan with the Michigan Department of Treasury; and

WHEREAS, failure to submit a deficit elimination plan and receive Department of Treasury approval for such plan could result in a reduction of State revenue Sharing; and

WHEREAS, expenses exceeded revenue resulting in a negative fund balance at the end of budgetary cycle for fiscal year ending September 30, 2022; and

WHEREAS, an increase in captured reimbursement revenue will correct this deficit; and

WHEREAS, the resulting deficit in Fund balance will be corrected to satisfy the budgetary requirements of the State of Michigan, Department of the Treasury

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Houghton County Board of Commissioners recognize that actions resulting in an increase in reimbursement revenue is warranted for this Nonmajor governmental fund; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Houghton County Board of Commissioners approve the projected budgetary change for the year ending September 30, 2023, for the Houghton County Treatment Court (Drug Court) Fund.

Motion was made by Commissioner Keranen and seconded by Commissioner Britz.



AYES: Keranen, Britz, Tikkanen, Anderson, Janssen (5).

NAYS: None (0).

RESOLUTION DECLARED ADOPTED.

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

STATE OF MICHIGAN     )  
  )ss.  
COUNTY OF HOUGHTON )

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**IN WITNESS WHEREOF**, I have hereunto set my official signature, this 9<sup>th</sup> Day of May, 2023.

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

**6. Airpark/Airport Sewer Ordinance**

A Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson and seconded by Commissioner Keranen to approve the Airpark/Airport Sewer Ordinance as presented. Administrator Larson stated a notification of the Ordinance will have to be put in the Gazette if the Board approves the Ordinance.

The Motion carried by the following vote.

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

**7. Karhu Cyber April 2023 Cybersecurity Report (FOUO) not subject to FOIA**

Chairman Tikkanen advised the Board to review the report.

**8. 911 Advisory Board Recommendation**

Commissioner Britz stated the City of Houghton Police Department was requesting 3 radios and Michigan Tech Public Safety was requested 1 radio for their police vehicles. The 911 Board approved the requests and have the funds available.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Britz and seconded by Commissioner Janssen to approve the 911 Board’s recommendation and approve \$24,000 for the City of Houghton Police Department radios and \$7,000 for the Michigan Tech Public Safety radio as presented.

The Motion carried by the following vote.

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

**9. Appropriations:**

**a. WUPPDR 3<sup>rd</sup> Q-\$2,974.25**

A Motion was made by Commissioner Janssen and seconded by Commissioner Britz to approve \$2,974.25 for the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter WUPPDR payment as presented.

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

**b. Karhu Cyber-\$8,506.02**

A Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson and seconded by Commissioner Keranen to approve the \$8,506.02 payment to Karhu Cyber with ARPA funds as presented.

The Motion carried by the following vote.

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

NO: None. 0

**Public Comments:**

Tim Gasperich asked if the marriage license fee will be increasing. Clerk Kelly explained the only increase will be for the ceremony fee for the weddings she performs.

Horst Schmidt addressed the Board about the culverts in Lake Linden.

**Announcements:**

Commissioner Keranen discussed the MAC Conference, and he talked about the value in meeting other Commissioners and Administrative Officers as well as some good learning sessions offered through the MCAC Conference. He also said that he enjoyed the opportunity to meet with our top legislators from both the House and the Senate to discuss matters including Mental Health Treatment and northern locations like ours.

**Adjournment:**

A Motion was made by Commissioner Keranen and seconded by Commissioner Anderson to adjourn at 5:12 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