

**HOUGHTON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING & PUBLIC HEARING
APRIL 8, 2025**

The Houghton County Board of Commissioners held a Public Hearing & a Regular Meeting on Tuesday, April 8, 2025 at 3:00 p.m. in the 5th 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 3:00 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 Chief Deputy County Clerk, Renee Cunningham:

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

Public Hearing-Skyline commons Brownfield Plan

a. Open Hearing

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

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

b. Discussion and Public Comment

Andy Moyle, owner of Skyline, stated that the Brownfield Authority, and City of Hancock are approving their company to repurpose the Finlandia buildings. They need the Commissioners' approval. This will help the underserved communities. They will have easy access to the first, second and third floors.

Jeff Ratcliffe, KEDA Director, stated that the Brownfield Authority approved the application with sign offs. This will help with housing issues in the area.

Mary Babcock, City of Hancock Manager, stated the Hancock City Council unanimously voted for this program, and she hoped the Commissioners would support.

c. Close Hearing

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

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

Approval of Minutes: March 31, 2025-Work Session

A Motion was made by Commissioner Keranen and seconded by Commissioner Britz to approve the minutes of the March 31, 2025-Work Session as presented.

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

Approval of Agenda/Additions:

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-Agenda Items only (5 minute limit):

Lisa Mackenzie addressed the Board regarding recycling.

Dr. Mary Beth Heinz addressed the Board supporting the senior meals program.

Jamie Kesti addressed the Board supporting the senior meals program.

Approval of Bills:

A Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson and seconded by Commissioner Janssen to approve paying the bills submitted of \$1,947,906.55.

The Motion carried by the following vote.

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

NO: None 0.

Correspondence:

None.

Reports:

Standing Committee:

Commissioner Keranen reported to the Board on the following:

Solid Waste Transfer Station: He discussed the report on the estimates from John Deere for \$17,000 and \$10,000 for an excavator.

Commissioner Janssen reported to the Board on the following:

BHK: an executive job was posted on their website.

Houghton Keweenaw Conservation District: A tree sale is occurring on HKCD.org, and the delivery date is in May. They held their annual meeting on April 11, 2025 at the Orpheum.

UPCAP: She was elected to the Executive Board. First meeting is at the next UPCAP Conference. There were 30,950 calls on the 211 help line.

Commissioner Anderson reported to the Board on the following:

State Legislative Bills: He stated the County should keep an eye on one for County, City, and Village Roads. The second bill is to amend the Land Division Act. Federal funding for FEMA is frozen. Road Commission is waiting on funding on approved projects. The Ripley creek project is still held up.

Commissioner Britz reported to the Board on the following:

HCRC: The February snow total was 106.7”.

Copper Country Great Start collaborates young children’s vaccines.

Chairman Tikkanen reported to the Board on the following:

Established a jail board task force. Commissioner Anderson is the Chair, and Commissioner Britz is the back up.

Airport: Load factors are above 80%. John Mayfield is coming in May to tour the airport.

County Officers:

Chairman Tikkanen stated Clerk Kelly provided her offices report in the Boards packet.

Todd LaRoux, Building Department Manager, discussed the marina roof project and other updates. Everything should be completed by May 15th.

Teresa Hill, HR Manager, stated a couple companies have reached out about the wage study. VC3 is set up as our new IT.

Old Business:

None.

New Business:

1. Resolution #25-05 Skyline Commons Redevelopment Brownfield Plan

Commissioner Anderson stated all of the Finlandia buildings were marketed. There are 27 units for housing and restaurants.

Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson and seconded by Commissioner Britz to adopt Resolution #25-05 as presented.

The Motion carried by the following vote.

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

NO: None. 0

**APPROVAL OF SKYLINE COMMONS REDEVELOPMENT
BROWNFIELD PLAN
RESOLUTION #25-05**

Motion by: _____, Supported by: _____

WHEREAS, the Michigan Brownfield Redevelopment Financing Act, Act 381, P.A. 1996 as amended, authorizes municipalities to create a brownfield redevelopment authority to promote the revitalization, redevelopment, and reuse of contaminated, blighted, functionally obsolete, historically designated or housing property through tax increment financing of Eligible Activities in a Brownfield Plan; and

WHEREAS, The Houghton County Board of Commissioners established the Houghton County Brownfield Redevelopment Authority in accordance with Act 381; and

WHEREAS, The Houghton County Brownfield Redevelopment Authority has reviewed the Brownfield Plan for the Skyline Commons Redevelopment in the City of Hancock at their March 11, 2025 meeting and recommends approval by the Houghton County Board of Commissioners and concurrence by the Hancock City Council; and

WHEREAS, the Hancock Downtown Development Authority and the Local Development Finance Authority of the Cities of Houghton and Hancock have approved resolutions foregoing capture of tax increment revenues on the subject property; and

WHEREAS, the Hancock City Council reviewed the Brownfield Plan at their March 19, 2025 meeting and concurred with the Brownfield Plan, as required by Act 381; and

WHEREAS, the Houghton County Board of Commissioners has determined that the Brownfield Plan constitutes a public purpose of blight removal, workforce housing, additional private investment and increased property tax value; and

WHEREAS, a public hearing on the Brownfield Plan has been noticed and held on April 8, 2025 and notice to taxing jurisdictions has been provided in compliance with the requirements of Act 381;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, WHEREAS, the Houghton County Board of Commissioners has reviewed the Brownfield Plan and finds, in accordance with the requirements of Section 14 of Act 381 that:

- (a) The Brownfield Plan meets the requirements of Section 13 of Act 381, Brownfield Plan Provisions as described in the Brownfield Plan, consistent with format recommended by the State of Michigan, including a description of the costs intended to be paid with tax increment revenues, a brief summary of eligible activities, estimate of captured taxable value and tax increment revenues, method of financing, maximum amount of indebtedness, beginning date and duration of capture, estimate of impact on taxing jurisdictions, legal description of eligible property, estimates of persons residing on the eligible property if applicable, and a plan and provisions for relocation of residents, if applicable.;
- (b) The proposed method of financing the costs of eligible activities, private financing arrangement by the developer is feasible and that the authority will not arrange financing, as described in Section 3.2 of the Plan;
- (c) The costs of eligible activities proposed are reasonable and necessary to carry out the purposes of Act 381, including meeting regulatory requirements and the cost estimates are based on evaluation from certified professionals, experience in comparable projects, and preliminary discussions with reputable companies, as described in Section 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3 of the Brownfield Plan; and
- (d) The amount of captured taxable value estimated from the adoption of the Brownfield Plan is reasonable, as calculated in Table 2 of the Plan, based on calculations of the tax revenues derived from taxable value increases and millage rates approved and authorized by the taxing jurisdictions on an annualized basis and balances against the outstanding eligible activity obligation approved as part of the Brownfield Plan and expenses reviewed and approved by the Houghton County Brownfield Redevelopment Authority; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that pursuant to the Brownfield Redevelopment Financing Act, Act 381 of the Public Acts of 1996, as amended, being MCL 125.2651, *et seq*, the Houghton County Board of Commissioners hereby approves the Brownfield Plan for the Skyline Commons Redevelopment.

Ayes: Commissioners
Nays: None
Absent: None

RESOLUTION DECLARED ADOPTED.

Tom Tikkanen, Chairman
Houghton County Board of Commission

Date

I, Jennifer Kelly, County Clerk of the County of Houghton, do hereby certify and set my seal to the above resolution as adopted April 8, 2025 at the Houghton County Courthouse, 401 East Houghton Street, Houghton, Michigan.

Jennifer Kelly, County Clerk

2. Joe Foster-Houghton County Survey & Remonumentation Program

Joe Foster addressed the Board regarding the 2025 Remonumentation total of \$78,419.00.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson and seconded by Commissioner Janssen to approve the 2025 Remonumentation as presented.

The Motion carried by the following vote.

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

NO: None. 0

3. Kevin Store-Elder Nutrition Millage Request

Kevin Store requested the Elder Nutrition Millage be added to the August 2025 ballot.

Commissioner Anderson stated Copper Shores gets monies from UPCAP and the rest is subsidized by the Foundation.

Kevin stated monies in the contract will terminate in September 2025 from the government. There are more than 50 plus elders on a waiting list. They have plans in place to meet the elders needs to get them food. They need to address the needs in our community. If they cannot get on the ballot in August or November, it would be pushed to next year. Kevin stated he had conversations with the prior Administrator.

Commissioner Anderson discussed when they will be ready to put the jail proposal on the ballot. He discussed deferring until the next special meeting.

Chairman Tikkanen thanked Kevin for his information and asked if other counties compared to Houghton County receiving 1 mill. Not all counties are equal. He talked about the new jail, and if the federal agency could shut down the Houghton County Jail. The Sheriff was not in attendance at the meeting to discuss this matter. Chairman Tikkanen and said everyone should think about the needs of Houghton County.

Kevin stated the community needs to address the needs that have been in place.

Commissioner Janssen supports and wants to see this on the ballot soon and reminded the Board of the woman at the end of the February meeting that stated to let the voters decide.

Chairman Tikkanen commented on the timing. The Houghton County Jail conditions are bad.

Kevin asked when he could get an answer.

Commissioner Anderson stated the Board controls the scenarios. The Board agreed to decide more in the next Work Session.

4. UPCAP Spring Conference

All Commissioners, Clerk, and Administrator can attend. Commissioner Janssen stated UPCAP will pay for her hotel since she is a Board Member.

Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson and seconded by Commissioner Janssen to approve any of the Commissioners, Clerk and Administrator to attend the UPCAP Spring Conference if they can attend.

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

5. BOC Work Session Scheduling

Commissioner Anderson discussed having monthly Work Sessions. They would be on the 1st Monday of each month at 10:00 am. The next one would be on May 5, 2025 at 10:00 am.

Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson and seconded by Commissioner Janssen to schedule monthly BOC Work Sessions on the 1st Monday of each month at 10:00 a.m. Next meeting will be on May 5, 2025 at 10:00 am.

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

6. Finance Committee-Bill approval process, update

The Finance Committee will meet the week prior to Board meetings. Commissioners Anderson and Keranen agreed to be on the Committee. They will meet every week until they can meet once per month.

Motion was made by Commissioner Britz and seconded by Commissioner Janssen to appoint Commissioners Anderson and Keranen to the Finance Committee.

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

7. MDI cost share with Keweenaw County

The Board had discussion on the cost sharing with Keweenaw County for a person not trained for the position. The Board agrees to share costs with Keweenaw County to get a person trained. They questioned how long the Board would give a person before they would have to pay monies back if they left the position.

Motion was made by Commissioner Janssen and seconded by Commissioner Britz to split costs 50/50 with Keweenaw County.

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

8. MDI Training Expense Contract

The Board discussed the 100% cost within 6 months for the ME Investigator training agreement.

Motion was made by Commissioner Janssen and seconded by Commissioner Anderson to adopt the medical training contract with Keweenaw County as presented. 100% of training costs if termination occurs within six (6) months of training completion. 50% of training costs if termination occurs between six (6) months and one (1) year of training completion. No repayment obligation if employment continues beyond one (1) year from the completion of training.

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

9. Appointed & Elected (Non-Union) FY2025 Compensation

The Board had discussion regarding the appointed and elected compensation.

Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson and seconded by Commissioner Britz to approve a wage increase of 1.75% retroactive to January 1, 2025 and another .75% increase in July 2025 for all appointed and elected.

The Motion carried by the following vote.

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

NO: None. 0

10. County Held Properties Discussion

Commissioner Keranen discussed the County Held Properties for the transfer station, marina, Medical Care Facility and Airport. Asked why we are holding these properties. He suggested selling them as we are in need of a jail. He asked if anyone is interested in purchasing them, and to put the held properties back on the tax rolls. He stated the County has three (3) options to get the jail. First is to get some gifts. Second is to tax the County. Third is to liquidate and sell some of the properties. He feels it is important to publicly state this statement.

Commissioner Anderson stated that if the County sells the marina, the County would have to pay off the grants to the DNR. For the transfer station, the County started one to stop a monopoly.

We serve small contractors. For Canal View, in the 50's or 60's the County converted the facility to the Medical Care Facility. A lot of patients have Medicaid which is reimbursed to the County and some are private pay or have other insurance. There is no private sector for airports.

Chairman Tikkanen thanked Commissioner Keranen for his initiative and it being an option to pay down debt. The priority is the jail.

Commissioner Janssen stated she investigated vacant parcels, and they are land locked. She will investigate more and report it to the Board later.

11. Materials Management Termination of Recycling

Commissioner Keranen stated the County lost \$13,000 in recycling. He stated the staff does top notch and Houghton County is not in the recycling business. Currently, Curt Judson does not have the crew to run recycling.

Commissioner Britz stated there is a problem with the process. Boxes are not broken down. Bins are always full and contaminated with wrong items people added.

Chairman Tikkanen stated the Board would discuss this at the next the next Work Session.

12. BOC Public Comments time limit update

The Board had discussion on the change from 5 to 3 minutes for public comments for all meetings. This change would still give people ample time to get the opportunity to speak.

Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson and seconded by Commissioner Britz to adopt Resolution #25-05 as presented.

The Motion carried by the following vote.

YES: Britz, Anderson, Tikkanen, Keranen 4.

NO: Janssen 1.

13. Travel

a. Chelsea Rheault-May 6, 2025 MERS Roundtable in Marquette

Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson and seconded by Commissioner Janssen to approve Administrator Rheault's travel to Marquette for the MERS Roundtable.

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

14. Appropriations

a. CCCMH Monthly Appropriation-\$13,707.91

b. Western UP Health Department

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.

Public Comments:

Faith Morrison asked when the official meeting is to make a decision.

Dr. Mary Beth Heins discussed the timing of millages and felt voters need more public education.

T. Randell addressed the Board regarding working at the Baraga County Jail and feels it benefits those who are jailed. He also feels life as a worker is different between the Houghton County and Baraga County Jails.

Chairman Tikkanen stated there are many presentations for voters to attend regarding the jail. There is a presentation available by Microsoft Teams on April 15th. He applauded the League of Women Voters for educating the public.

Commissioner Britz stated there is a correction on the next meeting place. It is in Alston, not Pelkie.

Drew Klimmer asked the Board not to put seniors against the jail and to bring them together.

Sarah Green discussed tariffs, and how senior meals and 31 Back Packs get help from local farmers, and 293 children in the head start program. She stated the needs of people don't go away when federal funding does.

David Gemignani commented on Microsoft Teams. He stated the jail deputies do not make enough. He stated Houghton County has TRI County funding paperwork to send to the State. He is having trouble making payroll.

Administrator Rheault stated the reporting has to be reviewed by the State, and she still has to review documents that she received from Ann Harris.

Ruth Glecker stated she has been working on recycling since the 80's. She encouraged the Board to go to Marquette County and see what they do for recycling. She thanked Chassell Township for taking cardboard for free.

Derek Poyhonen asked the Board to get the monthly cost out to the voters for the jail.

Allison Mills stated Copper Shores has been making purchases from her farm. They are creative. She asked the Board to put the millage on the ballot.

Carol Eckstrom stated the cardboard recycling has not been a problem. She wants the County to continue with recycling.

Angie Carter expressed her feelings on the importance of senior meals and feels it's important to purchase food from local farms and to support local businesses.

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.

Tom Tikkanen, Chairman

Jennifer Kelly, County Clerk