

**HOUGHTON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR & ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING
JANUARY 13, 2026**

The Houghton County Board of Commissioners held a Regular and Organizational Meeting on Tuesday, January 13, 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.

Moment of Silence in Memory of Mike Lahti, County Commissioner 2000-2006

The Commissioners and public in attendance had a moment of silence for Mike Lahti.

Roll call:

The following commissioners responded to roll call done by Clerk Kelly:

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

Houghton County Board of Commissioners Election

1. Vice Chairperson-Serving 1 Year Term

Chairman Tikkanen asked for nominations for Vice Chair. A nomination was made by Commissioner Anderson, and seconded by Commissioner Janssen for Roy Britz. Chairman Tikkanen asked for any other nominations. No other nominations were made.

The nomination carried by a voice vote. Ayes 4, Nays 0.

Roy Britz abstained from voting.

Approval of Minutes: December 1, 2025 Work Session, December 9, 2025 Regular Meeting

A Motion was made by Commissioner Janssen and seconded by Commissioner Anderson to approve the minutes of the December 1, 2025 Work Session and the December 9, 2025 Regular meeting as presented.

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

Late Agenda Item Requests:

None.

Approval of Agenda:

A Motion was made by Commissioner Keranen and seconded by Commissioner Britz to accept the Agenda as presented.

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

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

None.

Approval of Bills-\$1,193,339.39:

A Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson and seconded by Commissioner Keranen to approve paying the bills submitted of \$1,193,339.39. as presented.

The Motion carried by the following vote.

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

NO: None 0.

Reports:**Standing Committee:**

Commissioner Anderson reported to the Board on the following:

He discussed the DNR grant for approving the driveway access at the Houghton Douglas Falls.

Commissioner Keranen reported to the Board on the following:

He discussed the Recreation meeting that occurred on Monday. He stated the work will be done in 2027. The falls will be open until then and there will be a toilet and be ADA compliant.

County Held Properties Committee: they are looking at pros/cons and he is waiting to hear more later in the agenda about the appraisal at Canal View.

Commissioner Janssen reported to the Board on the following:

She attended the Jail Committee meeting.

Commissioner Britz reported to the Board on the following:

Sharon Avenue Property & current Jail Committee. The next meeting will be on January 29, 2026 at 10:00 am. People are touring the current jail.

Chairman Tikkanen reported to the Board on the following:

He attended the Jail Committee meeting.

He discussed the 2026 Gret Bear Chase. If people are REA customers, there is an article in their monthly magazine. Last year was the 45th year. There were approximately 800 people who participate with 67% of them being outside of Michigan

He had Faith Morrison give an updated on the Jail Committee. Faith Morrison stated she had a report from Jared Hyrkas the Chairman of the Jail Committee. The Committee meets monthly. Their next meeting is on February 2nd at 4:00 p.m. Public engagement has been low and the Committee is welcoming the public to attend meetings and get involved. Minutes are on the website. They are looking for volunteers for making videos.

Jail Needs Subcommittee: Faith reported that they are trying to reach out to the public to attend meetings and participate. She discussed Travis Dessellier's scenarios that he did. The scenarios were eye openers for the committee. She discussed the public's skepticism on why we need a new jail. Space is needed at the Jail.

County Officers:

Sheriff Saaranen stated there have been approximately 18-20 inmates.

Adam Laplander, Canal View Administrator, stated the holidays were busy.

Casey Polkinghorn, Airport Manager, discussed a water system upgrade, and a grant for an additional 6 T-hangars that would start in the fall 2026.

Chairman Tikkanen presented Dennis Hext with an appreciation plaque.

Lisa Mattila, Treasurer, stated she has returned to the office and thanked her staff for their hard work while she was out of the office.

New Business:

1. Rules of Order

Chairman Tikkanen discussed the recommendation of Administrator Rheault. Chairman Tikkanen and Clerk Kelly will meet regarding the Commissioner Appointments.

A Motion to adopt the Rules of Order with the recommendations of Administrator Rheault as presented was made by Commissioner Janssen and seconded by Commissioner Anderson.

The Motion carried by the following vote.

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

NO: None. 0

2. Amended Schedule of Board of Commissioners 2026 Meetings

A Motion was made by Commissioner Britz and seconded by Commissioner Janssen to approved both the Regular Meeting and Work Session calendars for 2026 as presented.

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

3. Amended 2025 Apportionment Report

Jaikob Djerf, Equalization Director, stated the amended report was necessary due to Adams Township not doing their fire levy. The report is for the taxable values across Houghton County. The 2025 total for Houghton County was 1,318,823,506.

Alex, IT, and Jaikob have been working with Snyder on the new system. Things are going smoothly. They still have the other system up and running. They hope for the Snyder system to be up and running by February-March 2026. He discussed splits for the 2026 assessments. Assessors will be able to communicate with Snyder if they have issues with the mapping.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Janssen and seconded by Commissioner Keranen to approve the amended 2025 Apportionment Report as presented.

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

4. Courthouse Security Presentation

Judge, Fraser Strome, introduced Jason Williams. Judge Strome emailed Chairman Tikkanen and Administrator Rheault an article dated January 9th written by Gerald Hill about the 40 most beautiful buildings in Michigan. Houghton County Courthouse was ranked #38. However, it is not the 38th most secured building according to Judge Strome. He thanked the Commissioners for the work that has been done in District court to make it safer. His concern is still not having a single point of entry. That is his number one (1) priority since 2019. The Board had approved the single point of entry and then COVID happened.

Jason Williams, Security Specialist, from Lansing stated there has been an increase approximately 40% to judiciary judges and staff for threats/violence. He stated the recommendation the County received in the past was from his predecessor. He said the county having a security committee is a positive thing. The doors now having cards instead of keys is positive. The improvements in District Court is positive. The FOC area is secure. What the courthouse is lacking is the single point of entry and screening people. There is no preventing

weapons now. His recommendation will be in his report. He recommends single point of entry to be on the first floor and is the most cost effective.

Chairman Tikkanen asked about the most current plan. Jason Williams stated he will look into it.

Commissioner Anderson asked if there is any funding available. Jason Williams stated there are grants available for the courts. He will provide information.

Commissioner Anderson discussed the recommendation for parking. Jason Williams stated it is on the lower part of the list to accomplish, but believes employee parking should be below the parking deck. This is a 2, 5, 10 year plan.

Sheriff Saaranen stated he met with Judge Strome and Jason Williams. They are working on layers of security. He is advocating for the single point entry and following the engineering designs. For physical security, the county already has a metal detector. There was discussion of eliminating one (1) restroom on the first floor, and have three (3) Sheriff employees present. One to do the security at the door, one present throughout the courthouse, and one as back up. He stated the front of the courthouse is not ADA compliant.

Todd LaRoux, Building Manager, stated UP Engineering did the design.

Chairman Tikkanen suggested setting up a subcommittee. Commissioner Keranen and Commissioner Britz will work with Sheriff Saaranen.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Britz and seconded by Commissioner Janssen to set up a Courthouse Security subcommittee with Commissioners Keranen and Britz working with Sheriff Saaranen.

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

5. Lisa McKenzie, Grant Single Housing/Family Rehab

Lisa McKenzie and Mary Ellen Hyttinen addressed the Board about the MI Hope program. The program will end in April 2026. MSHDA has the CDBG program available for municipalities to apply. The municipalities would do a letter of intent for single homes, then a letter of reservation is done, then the full application has to be submitted. It is time consuming. Lisa stated they would like to apply for \$500,000.00 beginning February 4, 2026. This could fix up to 20 homes in Houghton County. The state has \$10 million available for the next 5 years. She would like the Administrator or Treasurer's Office to assist them with the letter of intent and then finalize the application.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson and seconded by Commissioner Janssen to authorize Administrator Rheault to work with Lisa and Mary Ellen on applying for the \$500,000.00.

The Motion carried by the following vote.

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

NO: None. 0

6. Liz Ludington, Start Small

Liz Ludington gave a copy of the financial report to each Board member. They have been improving childcare. They have had 35 people inquire about centers compared to home based. They have 4 people going through the program now for home based childcare. They have created 18 jobs. There are 3 existing centers. They will be hosting a community form, and a community celebration. Everyone is invited to attend both. There is \$35,610 left from the 2025 budget. They hope to get more funding in 2026 and have requested \$41,000.00 from the County. They must spend it by September 30, 2026.

Commissioner Anderson asked about the initial grant of \$75,000.00. Liz stated that is why they are asking for \$41,000 this year and will try to find additional funding. They are doing good with marketing and awareness. The KEDA grants are now done.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson and seconded by Commissioner Janssen to table this matter until the February 2026 meeting when Administrator Rheault is available to verify what is in the budget for the \$41,000 request.

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

7. Tri County Public Defenders, November 2025 Payment Request-\$70,982.78

A Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson and seconded by Commissioner Janssen to approve paying the Tri County Public Defenders, November 2025 Payment Request of \$70,982.78 as presented.

The Motion carried by the following vote.

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

NO: None. 0

8. Tri County Public Defenders, December 2025 Payment Request-\$66,917.39

A Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson and seconded by Commissioner Janssen to approve paying the Tri County Public Defenders, December 2025 Payment Request of \$66,917.39 as presented.

The Motion carried by the following vote.

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

NO: None. 0

9. Mary Ann Krug, Letter of Support/IT

Chairman Tikkanen read a letter of support from Mary Ann Krug, Chief Deputy Register of Deeds for Alex Radke, IT.

10. Appointment of Finance Committee Members and Alternatives

Chairman Tikkanen stated Commissioners Anderson and Keranen are on the Finance Committee. There are no alternates. If one (1) Commissioner is out of town, it may delay checks going out.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Britz and seconded by Commissioner Anderson to have Chairman Tikkanen, Commissioner Britz and Commissioner Janssen be alternates for the Finance Committee.

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

11. Houghton County Land Bank Authority Board Appointment(s)

Chairman Tikkanen stated it was recommended that Commissioner Anderson be reappointed.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson and seconded by Commissioner Janssen to appoint Easton Laitila to the Houghton Couty Land Bank Authority Board.

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

A Motion was made by Commissioner Janssen and seconded by Commissioner Britz to re-appoint Commissioner Anderson to the Houghton Couty Land Bank Authority Board.

The Motion carried by a voice vote. Ayes 4, Nays 0.
ABSTAIN: Anderson 1.

12. Houghton County IT Discussion: YouTube Meetings/Recordings

Alex, IT, stated he can put the recordings on YouTube. The cost is free.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson and seconded by Commissioner Keranen to have Alex, IT, begin putting the Board meetings on YouTube beginning the February 2026 meeting.

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

13. Houghton County Marina Survey Services

A Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson and seconded by Commissioner Keranen to accept the engineering survey as presented.

The Motion carried by the following vote.

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

14. Canal View Appraisal Quotes

A Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson and seconded by Commissioner Janssen to approve the \$5,000 appraisal quote as presented.

The Motion carried by the following vote.

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

15. Jury Board Appointment

A Motion was made by Commissioner Anderson and seconded by Commissioner Britz to appoint Sharon Foix to the Jury Commission Board.

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

16. Appropriations

- a. UPEDA Membership-\$500.00
- b. Copper Country Community Mental Health-\$13,707.91

A Motion was made by Commissioner Britz 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:

Sara Green addressed the Board regarding federal actions.

Dawn Kizer addressed the Board regarding Canal View. Chairman Tikkanen stated there has been no decision to sell Canal View.

Faith Morrison addressed the Board stating the location needs to be determined for the new jail.

Chairman Tikkanen stated a deadline will be discussed at the next Work Session.

Dennis Hext thanked the Board for the plaque. He just received word that the Airport will be receiving a \$1 million grant from EGLE.

Commissioner Janssen stated she supports Sara Green’s public comments.

Announcements:

None.

Adjournment:

A Motion was made by Commissioner Keranen and seconded by Chairman Anderson to adjourn at 7:44 p.m.

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

Tom Tikkanen, Chairman

Jennifer Kelly, County Clerk

APPROVED:_____

Clerk’s Initials