

**HOUGHTON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
WORK SESSION  
FEBRUARY 2, 2026**

The Houghton County Board of Commissioners held a Work Session on Monday, February 2, 2026 at 10:00 a.m. in the 5<sup>th</sup> 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 10:00 a.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; Gretchen Janssen District 4; Roy Britz, District 5.

Absent: Joel Keranen, District 2; Glenn Anderson, District 3.

**Agenda/Additions:**

Commissioner Anderson requested discussion about the childcare monies previous voted on by the Board.

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

None.

**Houghton County Board of Commissioners Work Session:**

**1. Proposed contract for in-house IT**

Chairman Tikkanen discussed what other companies are available for IT. We have back up now for power. Currently the County has VC3 and Superior Tech Wizards for IT.

Commissioner Britz stated he had spoken with staff and in-house IT is important to them.

Chairman Tikkanen stated the County is reviewing the contract with VC3. VC3 has stated they would charge \$350,000.00 with Alex being the in-house IT.

Faith Morrison discussed how IT is handled at MTU.

Chairman Tikkanen stated Alex has a person to assist him with the in-house IT. The Board approved two (2) people.

Commissioner Britz stated the County is too big for one (1) IT person.

Todd LaRoux, Building Department, suggested having two (2) full time in-house IT.

Chairman Tikkanen suggested the County having one (1) IT firm to provide all the County's needs. He stated the VC3 contract should be updated at a minimum.

Commissioner Britz stated Alex Radke is a contract employee with the County. He stated the Board would get monthly updates from Karhu. VC3 has never provided any updates.

Faith Morrison asked if REMC is a possibility. Chairman Tikkanen said they had showed interest but could not assist the County.

Tom Bingham stated Alex Radke is easy to work with.

Todd LaRoux stated Alex was very knowledgeable with the generator.

Faith Morrison said the Board should consider working with REMC. She asked if Alex would have full access with VC3 as he doesn't have it now.

Chairman Tikkanen stated REMC cannot do in-house IT.

Administrator Rheault stated REMC does not have the manpower for in-house IT.

Chairman Tikkanen discussed the County doing a RFP for security and hoping REMC, UP & Running and Karhu will respond.

Chairman Tikkanen asked Alex Radke to work on the contract.

Commissioner Britz stated Alex is a solid choice.

## **2. Ad Hoc Website Update Committee**

Chairman Tikkanen discussed the difficulty in navigating on the County website and feels the website needs a refresh. He suggested getting a committee to discuss the website and then work with Opus.

Todd LaRoux stated the Building Department has a lot of forms, links, and credit cards on file.

Commissioner Janssen, Alex Radke, and Jennifer Kelly agreed to be the Ad Hoc Committee.

Todd LaRoux suggested asking Jeff at Opus what he would like from the County for changes, and to ask what department heads want.

## **3. Single Point of Entry**

Administrator Rheault stated Easton is working on the ARPA monies hopefully this week.

Chairman Tikkanen stated the Board committed to the single point of entry.

Todd LaRoux stated they received the revised cost plans. The document is dated January 26, 2026, for \$192,796 for the renovation.

Chairman Tikkanen stated the Board needs to know where we are financially. The first floor is the best option financially. He reminded everyone that the Sheriff stated three (3) people would be needed. That is an increase in payroll.

Commissioner Britz stated a new scanner would be more efficient. A complete scanner would be approximately \$16,000.00. A person would have to man the scanner.

Chairman Tikkanen questioned how much money the County can put into this project, but stated it is something that must be done.

Commissioner Britz discussed the letters back to 2018 regarding the single point entry. He said the Board needs to take action. He discussed grants.

Faith Morrison discussed the agricultural grant through Congressman Bergman.

Chairman Tikkanen stated that agricultural grant was to be used for engineering costs for a new jail. He stated this could be something for the Courthouse Security Committee to consider.

Todd LaRoux stated the total cost including engineering would be \$217,046.00.

Chairman Tikkanen discussed finding out the amount of available ARPA funds for this project.

Commissioners Keranen and Britz along with Administrator Rheault should be a Single Point of Entry Committee. Administrator Rheault will put this on next week's agenda.

#### **4. Jail Committees Update**

Chairman Tikkanen stated it has to be determined where the jail should be and to have a plan for the next 10-20 years.

Commissioner Janssen stated every property should be appraised. The County should know the values of the properties.

Chairman Tikkanen asked if the totals are in the County audit report. He said the Canal View appraisal will happen. He questioned if it has been ordered.

Faith Morrison stated the County needs a new jail. The jail needs to be safe. She discussed the budget process and to make everything transparent for the public. The \$300,000 is a concern for the budget.

Chairman Tikkanen stated the Board has to protect the courthouse with security.

Chairman Tikkanen said the Board needs to verify if the appraisal at Canal View has been ordered. If they haven't ordered it, the County Board will. It is on record that Canal View said they would pay for it.

Chairman Tikkanen stated the committees are to get the Board final reports. A decision needs to be made where the new jail will be built.

Commissioner Britz stated that the committees are all saying that the Sharon Avenue property is the best place for a new jail.

Chairman Tikkanen stated he feels the new jail will go on a ballot in 2026.

Commissioner Britz stated it was previously voted on 3-2 for Canal View to pay for the appraisal.

Chairman Tikkanen stated the County should order it, then figure out who pays for it. The appraisal should be delivered to the County at the courthouse.

Faith Morrison stated she did not know if the building could be used now based on the engineering plans to move the courts to the Sharon Avenue property. She discussed if it is better to have Canal View public ownership or be privatized. There is too much money to pay back the DNR for the marina. We need a purpose; know what information we are looking for and to have a plan in place. Have a document as to why it is the best price, location, and what the deal with the church was for the number of years they stayed at the church.

Alex Radke, IT, stated once all the information is ready, it should be given to the media and social media.

Chairman Tikkanen said the Board should request final reports in April 2026 from the committees. Need a decision from the County Held Properties committee.

Commissioner Britz said the committees are looking at every option for the courthouse, jail and Sheriff.

Chairman Tikkanen stated appraisals take time, but hopefully the Board can push for them to get done. He feels it is important to see the Canal View appraisal. He would like to see an April deadline for the committee reports and to consider November 2026 to go on the ballot.

#### **5. Childcare Discussion**

Commissioner Britz discussed the previously \$200,000 payment for childcare. It was a 3-year budget. It was approved for the first year but cannot find the second year.

Administrator Rheault stated \$140,000 has been given.

**Public Comment-\*(3-minute limit):**

None.

**Announcements:**

None.

**Adjournment:**

A Motion was made by Commissioner Janssen and seconded by Commissioner Britz to adjourn at 12:02 p.m.

The Motion carried by a voice vote. Ayes 3, Nays 0.

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Tom Tikkanen, Chairman

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Jennifer Kelly, County Clerk

APPROVED\_\_\_\_\_

JK