

HOUGHTON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING
May 11, 2021 - 5:00 PM

Enduring Gifts Fund Raising Initiative

County Administrator Ben Larson is requesting permission to and initiate fund raising activities, and to establish short term and longer term “endowed” Enduring Gift funds for the County. If approved he will research and establish governing policies for this activity, and gift agreement language and policy among other needs for full implementation. This will include work and careful consideration with the Michigan State Department of Treasury, the County Attorney, and the County’s external auditor. If approved, this will allow for fund raising activities for those who would consider making outright gifts (big and small), and those who would consider making bequests and other estate planning options to benefit the County. Administrator Larson has spoken with the external auditor, the County Attorney, and the State to explore the preliminaries. If the BOC agrees to proceed, the final preparations and research would come next, and then a formal resolution in the June or July meeting to adopt policies and launch the new initiative.

Clerk Office Requests

Clerk Jennifer Kelly requests the possible fingerprinting for Concealed Pistol Licenses to be moved to the Clerk Office from the current location at the Sheriff’s Department.

Clerk Kelly also requests consideration for a minor rate increase to vital records processes and service to the public.

MAC and NACO Conference Zoom Updates

Administrator Larson has attended several zoom conference meetings of late. Updates offered will come from conference material that was shared from both the Michigan Association of Counties Administrator meetings, and also one with the National Association of Counties.

The ATC Company

The ATC company has approached the county in regards to a possible permanent easement purchase for the Cell Tower that is located at the end of Tower Road behind the Calumet Police post. This cell phone tower serves customers for Alltel and Verizon phones in the Calumet area. The ATC company owns the tower, and it is sitting on County owned land with many years of collections already complete. Administrator Larson has been asked to bring this lease purchase option to the Board for consideration, and paperwork with the company and attorneys is still being considered. This could be a discussion item or an ask to sell the easement, but as of Friday it is too soon to make that call. A price of \$132,000 is on the table, and with the ATC Leadership for a decision hopefully by Tuesday. The County Attorney Roger Zappa has been consulted, and has considered the purchase documents and would be working on any final documents as well.

County Property Holdings

New Building Coordinator Sara Huuki has collected a representation on the google earth platform, and in Sara’s collection are all of the holdings owned by the County. A visual

representation and USB drive with the files will be shared with the BOC and each Commissioner, and the files will be shown on the BOC room computer screen as well.

Marina and Transfer Station Updates

The Marina has had many updates completed to get ready for the opening day of May 1, and some will be continuing in the week ahead. Groundwork has been completed around the bathhouse and spillway on depression areas and those worn out over time, trip hazards in the form of broken concrete sidewalk pieces have been removed and replaced, showerhead upgrades in the bathhouse have been installed, and the spillway has been cleaned out of large quantities of sand that has pretty much filled this spillway over time. This should help to stop the flow of silt going out into the canal, and the upriver sump pond on the other side of Royce Road and between Royce and the highway was also cleaned of lots of material. Unfortunately, a “plume” remains that extends out into the canal at the end of the spillway, but a request and formal application to remove the silt has been filed with EGLE and with the Army Corps of Engineers. If granted this permit, the County would have 5 years to clean up the siltplane that is now under three of the slips. At the shore three outlet culverts exhaust the spillway, and at the present time two are 100% filled and one is flowing at roughly 10%. The County would hope to partner with the City of Houghton on their dock project that was recently announced, and if the low bidder has large equipment out on pontoons, the County will hopefully work with that firm to also take care of our plume. Administrator Larson has spoken with Eric Waara at the City of Houghton about that possibility, and also Jean Battle from the Army Corps and Hunter King from EGLE. Hunter King has also visited the marina with Larson to take a personal look, and he has said that the permit should be attainable. The Marina wifi and computer network systems are experiencing huge upgrades, and High Speed Fiber is now running into the Harbormaster’s Office building. Prior to this, all electronic communications were coming over on a beam from the top of the UPPCO building. This move will boost the security of credit card transactions, and greatly increase the speed of internet and wifi for the staff and slip owners and guests. A wifi repeater has also been installed for the east end of the marina, to better serve the slip lease members in that section of the marina. Safety cameras have been updated and will be installed as well. LED lights are being installed on the many light poles around the parking lot and shoreline sidewalk, and a new roof has also been installed for the Harbormaster’s Office building.

Vital repairs to equipment and the trash collection and processing area have recently been completed at the Transfer Station. They have also just received hot water for the first time in many years, as the current system has been out of service and not working for a long time. A new recycling initiative has started, and service for single stream recycling is now happening on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. This is a cooperative effort with the Copper Country Recycling Initiative, and a new “teepee” bin has been installed and is being filled to the left as you enter the Atlantic Mine facility. The old transfer station sale has been completed with M&M title, and all of the documents have been signed and payment has been made by new owner Great American Disposal. A monthly tonnage report for the current transfer station will also be compiled and shared at the meeting.

Appropriations

There are three appropriations to be considered for payment: the WUPPDR Quarterly matching fund program, for the County's UPEDA membership, and for the County's agreement to participate and do cost sharing for the Northcare Network with Liquor Tax collections.