

**REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**  
**HOUGHTON TOWNSHIP BOARD**

**Monday, October 16, 2023**

**CALL TO ORDER AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:**

Supervisor Ray Chase called the regular meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

The Board and those in attendance recited the Pledge of Allegiance

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Supervisor Ray Chase, Clerk Wanda Kolb, Treasurer Mary Long, Trustee Steve Kline

**ABSENT:** Trustee Tom Hall

**AGENDA ADDITIONS/APPROVAL:** Motion by Steve, seconded by Mary to approve the agenda as written. Motion passed unanimously.

**CONSENT AGENDA APPROVAL:**

- Motion by Ray, seconded by Steve, to approve minutes of September 18, 2023 Regular Meeting. Motion passed unanimously.
  - Treasurers' Report. Motion by Wanda, seconded by Steve to accept the treasurers report. Motion passed unanimously.
  - Motion by Steve, seconded by Ray to approve payment of bills. Motion passed unanimously via roll call.
  - General Fund: Check: #5812 to Election Source for \$99.23, #5813 to Always Available Sewer and Drain for \$128.00, #5814 to Houghton Township Square Park for \$400, #5815 to Steve Kline for \$78.50, #5816 to Ray Chase for \$387.87, #5817 to Sara Huuki for \$369.40, #5818 to Wanda Kolb for \$507.92, #5819 to Mary Long for \$576.49, #5820 to Dave Schumacher for \$425.51, #5821 to Election Source for \$447.46, AP UPPCO for \$190.47, AP UPPCO for \$189.89, AP Verizon for \$29.23, AP waste management for \$508.83, (Total: \$4338.80)
  - Water Fund: Check: #1749 to Whitewater for \$40.00, #1750 to Mel Jones for \$350.93, #1751 to Mary Long for \$135.06, AP UPPCO for \$185.78, (Total: \$711.77)
  - Cemetery Fund: Check #1174 \$55.41 (Total: \$55.41)
  - Park Fund: Check # 1042 to Dan Steck for \$401.55 (Total \$401.55)
  - For a final total of: \$5507.53

**BUDGET AMENDMENT:**

Motion by Steve, seconded by Ray to accept all budget amendments as listed below. Motion carried unanimously.

A budget amendment to the cemetery fund to FICA/MC for \$2.21

A budget amendment to the cemetery fund to wages for \$40.00

A budget amendment to Houghton Township general fund of \$546.69 for election supplies

A budget amendment to the Township Square Park of \$189.00 to the facilities and equipment.

**CORRESPONDENCE**

The following was provided for information: an email was received from Hannula Agency dated 09/26/2023 with a copy of the MTPP insurance policy dated 07/06/2023 – 07/06/2024.

An email from the Michigan Department of Treasury with a letter dated 10/02/2023 indicating our F65 form (a form submitted by the auditor 6 months after the close of the fiscal year) was delinquent. The form was submitted by our auditor on 10/02 and is now listed on the government web site as submitted 09/30. It is no longer considered delinquent.

MSU Extension webinars on seasonal workforce housing and short-term rentals. Information is available if interested in attending the webinars. There is a \$30 fee.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

- Status of ROW encroachment Fitzgerald's Restaurant. Greg Kingstrom, Engineer/Manager, Keweenaw County Road Commission presented an update. Mr. Kingstrom provided two handouts to Board members: 1. An Abandonment Petition delivered to the Road Commission on 09/18/23 by Mike LaMotte and 2. A Public Highways and Private Roads (Excerpt) Act 283 of 1909. Mr. Kingstrom explained that the petition brought by Mr. LaMotte is requesting that a 20-foot depth north of front street and south of the building involving Lots 5, 6, and 7 for the entire length of the

building be abandoned. There will be a petition review and public hearing on December 12 at 2 pm. At this time the location is unknown but the public notice will be served. The Road Commission is a three-person board and will vote as to whether or not to abandon. This is only the first step in a series of steps required to resolve this issue. If the KCRC board votes to abandon the area as requested, the township then has first rights to the area abandoned. The township can decide to either retain the property or allow it to revert to the adjoining landowner. The Road Commission requires that 40 feet remain for 2-way traffic. Township board members were also provided with a copy of an email sent to Wanda Kolb on 10/16/2023 from Mike LaMotte. The Board earlier received an email with an attachment from Dan Steck pertaining to this matter. Ray Chase requested that questions be held until the public meeting. No action was taken as all correspondence is to be reviewed by counsel.

- Letter of Support Request – Nature Conservancy/Julia Peterson. The Nature Conservancy along with the Keweenaw County Sheriff's Department and Keweenaw County are applying for a \$50,000 grant from the Office of Rural Development to proceed with Phase 1 of a project to focus on development of plans for a brick-and-mortar Keweenaw County Emergency Response Center. The center would provide an area for training, storage of equipment and provide space needed when responding to large emergencies. Motion by Ray, seconded by Steve to provide a letter of support. Motion carried unanimously. Ms. Peterson requested she receive the letter by Friday, October 20.
- Copper Country Recycling Initiative request. Douglas McKenzie, a member of Copper Country Recycling Initiative, is requesting that a 2 page list of recycling options in our area be included as a handout in our winter tax mailing. The Initiative will supply the cost for paper/printing. Volunteers with the organization will print, fold and stuff the envelopes if we desire them to do so. There was no objection to the request.
- Michigan Backflow Prevention Assembly Tester Credentials. After 07/31/2024 backflow prevention assembly testing must be done by a qualified plumber with the proper certification. Currently the person doing the testing is not required to be a plumber. The township must receive a copy of the tester's qualifications with the results of testing. This testing is paid for by the customer. Mel explained this only applies to a few water customers who have a boiler system with antifreeze that is connected to the public water system. He also explained a method that does not require use of the Backflow Prevention Device.
- Township Attorney Status- Wanda reported that credentials for a number of attorneys have been reviewed and two attorneys were interviewed by deputy clerk Linda Paradiso. A motion was made by Wanda, seconded by Steve to retain Kendrick, Bordeau as our Township law firm, with Patrick Greeley as our attorney. Motion carried unanimously. They will draw up a Letter of Engagement which will serve as our contract.
- Employee Handbook – the handbook was distributed prior to the meeting for board review. Motion by Ray, seconded by Steve to accept the Employee Handbook as written. Motion carried unanimously.
- Employee Performance Review approval – The Employee Performance review was distributed to board members for review prior to the meeting. Motion by Ray, seconded by Steve to accept the Employee Performance review as written. Motion carried unanimously.
- Change of November meeting date – Wanda requested that the November meeting date be changed as she will be out of town. The meeting date was set for Tuesday, November 21.
- Bridge Update – Steve reported that he spoke with Gary Bays before he left for the season. Gary spoke with former Trustee Mark McEvers and Steve Wright from UP Engineers regarding future bridge inspections. Pedestrian bridges should be inspected every five years. UP Engineers estimates at least \$2,000 for an inspection. The board agrees that an inspection is overdue and we should plan for one in 2024. We will plan for the spring and summer to do fundraising for the project. Houghton Township thanks Mark McEvers for providing the township with all previous paperwork for the bridge.

## **DEPARTMENT REPORTS.**

**Assessing – Sara Huuki:** No report.

**Water Department – Mel Jones:** No problems identified. Water turnoff is ongoing with approximately a dozen more to do. The deer park will be shut off this week. A meter will be placed there next year when turned on so that we can determine the amount of water used.

**Cemetery/Committee – Wanda Kolb/Steve Kline–** 4 lots have been sold this summer. Steve and volunteers have placed additional markers. Steve reported more markers may be placed next year and road construction and maintenance will be considered along with possible fundraising.

**Elections – Wanda Kolb:** Wanda reported that the Board of Elections (BOE) sponsored an education session in Hancock for area clerks and deputy clerks regarding the new Michigan election laws. Wanda and deputy clerk Linda both attended. Both Wanda and Linda have now obtained access to the Qualified Voting Files (QVF) and will be meeting with Julie Carlson, Keweenaw County Clerk on Thursday, October 19, to begin reviewing and organizing the file. Voting supplies for 2024 have been purchased. A letter has been sent to the Keweenaw County Clerk as required indicating our desire to enter into an agreement to be included in a single early voting site which will be in Eagle Harbor. Our precinct will be open to township residents on election day. Education will be provided to the public related to early voting by the BOE

**General Maintenance – Dave Schumacher –** no report.

**Parks – Dan Steck:** Water to be shut off on Tuesday, October 17. The pavilion used approximately 10,000 gallons of water serving approximately 5,000 people.

#### **UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

- Water Ordinance and Rate Revisions: Steve reviewed changes to the water department rate structure. Current residential water service fee is \$10 with each additional 1000 gallons \$3.00. Proposed for 2024 a \$15 service fee and \$4.50 for additional 1000 gallons. The maintenance fee would jump from \$10/month to \$30/month. A \$35.00 turn off fee would be charged. Commercial rates for water usage would increase from \$10 to \$15 and the proposed each additional 1000 gallons would increase from \$4.00 to \$4.50. Gallons used previous year multiplier would increase from 50,000 x \$10 to 50,000 x \$30. With these main changes revenue would increase from \$20,000 to \$44,000/year. The ordinance and resolution will be reviewed by our attorney. Once this is done a public hearing will be set and advertised.
- Water Project System Funding – No funding has been obtained to date. We will again submit the grant application for FY 2025. There will be no added expense from Traverse Engineering. Linda is also in the process of applying for loan funding through USDA rural development.
- Curbside Trash Pick Up – As reported by Tom at last month’s meeting, we expect Waste Management at our November meeting to answer questions.
- New location dry hydrant – Ray spoke with the county supervisor and reported there are problems with the location suggested for a new dry hydrant. There will be no further action.
- Routine Maintenance: Ray reported he has been unable to contact the contractor for our septic system. We are currently having no problems.
- PAR plan suggestions follow up: Dave has purchased CO/fire alarms and will install this week. Ray has been unable to contact the person suggested for testing fire extinguishers. Suggestions for alternate companies were provided by the audience.
- Strategic Planning dates were set for November 27 and December 11. The public is encouraged to attend and contribute. The dates will be posted on the website and usual bulletin boards.
- Community Center Grant (community building renovation) A response is expected on October 23.
- **PUBLIC COMMENT**  
None

Meeting adjourned: Meeting adjourned at 7:08 p.m. on motion by Wanda, seconded by Steve, motion passed unanimously.

Next regular meeting – November 21, 2023 at 6:00 p.m.

I, the undersigned, Wanda Kolb, the appointed Clerk for the Township of Houghton, Keweenaw County, Michigan, DO CERTIFY that the foregoing is a true and complete copy of the certain proceedings taken by the Township Board of said Township at a regular board meeting held on the 16<sup>th</sup> day of October, 2023.

---

Wanda Kolb, Clerk, Houghton Township