

OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS
KEWEENAW COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING
July 21, 2021

The regular meeting of the Keweenaw County Board of Commissioners held on July 21, 2021, beginning at 6:30 p.m., at the Courthouse, Eagle River, MI opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

The meeting was posted on the door of the Courthouse and on the County website.

Commissioner's present: Bob DeMarois, Randy Eckloff, Jim Vivian, Don Piche, Del Rajala.

Motion by DeMarois supported by Eckloff and unanimously carried to accept the agenda with the addition under New Business: item m) Authorize Treasurer to Add Remote Deposit.

Motion by Vivian supported by DeMarois and unanimously carried to approve the June 16, 2021, regular monthly meeting minutes as written.

The following reports were available: Sheriff, Treasurer and Mine Inspector.

Public comment was offered, there was none.

Motion by DeMarois supported by Eckloff to pay the approved and audited bills in the following amounts; General Fund=\$176,538.29 Construction Codes Fund=\$4,795.27 911 Fund=\$788.83 Child Care Fund=\$1,478.18 Houghton County Medical Care Fund=\$2,543.70 Veterans Affairs=\$3,422.17 Board polled. Ayes: DeMarois, Eckloff, Vivian, Piche. Nays: None. Abstain: Rajala. Motion carried.

Rajala stated that Gogo may be waiting until next year to update or add their equipment to the MHG tower. We will remove this item from the agenda for now.

The ATV Club had asked if they could get assistance from the county to cover the signs that are destroyed or stolen from the trails. Vivian will talk to our attorney to see if there is anything to be done.

Motion by Rajala supported by DeMarois and unanimously carried to go ahead with the postcard to be mailed out to homeowners informing them that zoning permits are required.

Motion by Rajala supported by Eckloff and unanimously carried to follow the recommendation of the Planning Commission and appoint the following: Planning Commission-Nancy DeForge (term ending 12/31/21) and Sara Heikkinen (term ending 12/31/2022) and to the Zoning Board of Appeals-Dan Yoder (term ending 12/31/23) and Harvey Desnick (term ending 12/31/23).

Motion by Rajala supported by DeMarois and unanimously carried to concur with the Planning Commission that Allouez Township is in compliance with the Zoning Ordinance regarding Article 10 Section 5.1 general standards and Article 10 Section 12.29 on public buildings. All items for compliance were read aloud and agreed upon. The special use permit is granted to Allouez Township to build a new fire hall.

Motion by DeMarois supported by Vivian and unanimously carried to pay an additional \$300 to North of 45 to hold a stakeholder meeting for the revision of the zoning ordinance.

Motion by DeMarois supported by Eckloff and unanimously carried to amend the 911 budget by adding and additional \$50,000 for capital outlay. This covers new radios that were ordered in December but weren't received until March and it also includes the completion of the fire paging from the Sheriff to the State Police tower near Copper Harbor.

Motion by Rajala supported by Eckloff and unanimously carried to approve the application for the FY22 County Veteran Service Fund Grant from the Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency.

Motion by Rajala supported by Eckloff and unanimously carried to approve the resolution for the U.P. Area Agency on Aging regarding the FY 2022 Annual Implementation Plan for Services to Older Adults. **(#21-4)**

Motion by Rajala supported by DeMarois and unanimously carried to approve the following resolution regarding a tourism excise tax:

WHEREAS, State Rep. Sara Cambensy has introduced House Bills 5172 and 5173 to help local communities deal with providing increased public safety measures specific to exponential increases in tourism like the biking of Copper Harbor and campgrounds being full; and

WHEREAS, several regions, not just Northern Michigan, are draining their taxpayer public safety funds to take care of large increases in tourism in their areas that require increased police road patrols, rescue missions, patrolling with the influx of vehicle traffic; and

WHEREAS the bills will allow each county the ability to put a local excise tax on the ballot to collect up to a 3 percent local tax on transient housing to be used only for public safety; and

WHEREAS all 83 counties will be eligible to decide how the money is spent, as Michigan does not allow a local taxing authority as is found in other states and it is necessary for the Legislature to authorize all Michigan counties to do this; and

WHEREAS, hotels in the Upper Peninsula are currently being taxed 11 percent with 5 percent going to the state, 5 percent going to local convention and visitor bureaus, 1 percent going to the UP-wide Convention and Visitor Bureau Fund and nothing going to local communities to help manage the influx of tourists; and

WHEREAS, research shows surrounding Great Lakes states are taxing their transient housing upwards of 7% to 17%, with Michigan being far behind, it is in the best interest of Michigan communities to adequately fund already strained public safety budgets for both residents and tourists;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that Keweenaw County supports a Tourism Reinvestment Excise Tax as embodied in House Bills 5172 and 5173. **(#21-5)**

Motion by DeMarois supported by Eckloff and unanimously carried to approve the following resolution regarding opposition to the Secretary of State by appointment only system:

WHEREAS, Michigan Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson, recently stated Michigan residents will always need an appointment to conduct business at a Secretary of State branch office and suggested making this permanent change, is an improvement in service; and

WHEREAS, the Secretary of State called walk in service at the branches an “antiquated, inefficient, take-a-number system that nobody liked”; the reality is that most people do want the option to walk into a branch office for service at their convenience; and

WHEREAS, not only Keweenaw County residents but all residents of the State of Michigan should have the ability to renew and make changes to all necessary documentation timely and locally through services provided by the Michigan Secretary of State; that these changes defy common sense in serving the public and is a significant reduction in convenient service; and

WHEREAS, some industry changes were positive during the coronavirus and made sense; this change does not as constituents need to be able to transfer vehicles, renew and update driver’s licenses expediently, so that they can prove and provide legal ownership and residency; and

WHEREAS, these changes have been established without input from constituents, who are directly affected by this sweeping change and web-based services do not completely replace the need for walk in service at the branch offices. Many older residents and those without computers or internet will simply be turned away at the Secretary of State door. This is unacceptable as Keweenaw County has numerous retirees and a lack of adequate internet; and

WHEREAS, these changes will only continue to frustrate citizens who just would like their license renewed or to be able to sell a vehicle, without having to wait weeks or even months or drive to a different service area to accomplish these simple tasks.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that Keweenaw County hereby strongly opposes “By Appointment Only” services for residents not only in Keweenaw County but for the entire State of Michigan

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this resolution be forwarded to Governor Whitmer, Secretary of State Benson, Senate and House leaders of Keweenaw County and the Michigan Association of Counties. **(#21-6)**

Motion by Rajala supported by DeMarois and unanimously carried to table the trails property until August. Mark Hannula, insurance agent for the county, spoke about the liability of the feature trails in Copper Harbor. Mr. Hannula said that a \$5 million dollar limit is required before the trails can reopen. Nathan Miller from the Copper Harbor Trails Club stated that they are working on a new policy with a \$5 million dollar limit. Once that is in place, they will reach out to the county attorney to get a contract that is agreeable to both the county and the Trails Club.

Motion by Rajala supported by DeMarois and unanimously carried to begin the process of getting a garage/storage building built on premises for the Sheriff Department equipment.

Motion by DeMarois supported by Rajala and unanimously carried to appoint the following people to a committee for finding uses for the American Rescue Plan money that the county is slated to receive: Treasurer, Clerk, Sheriff, Commissioner DeMarois and Commissioner Rajala.

Motion by Rajala supported by Eckloff and unanimously carried to authorize Treasurer Eric Hermanson to enable and use Remote Capture Deposit services from Superior National Bank on the account that he currently has access to, the pooled account known as PUB NOW 0004.

Rajala recommended that a letter of condolence be sent to Houghton County on the recent loss of their Sheriff Brian McLean. All were in agreement and extended sympathies to Sheriff McLean's family, friends and his staff at the Houghton County Sheriff Department.

Paul Putnam from MSU Extension addressed the Board regarding assistance for U.P. veterans and their families with a food program. Please get the word out.

Time was allowed for public comment.

There being no further business, motion by Rajala to adjourn at 7:37 p.m. Meeting adjourned.

Donald Piche, Chairman

Julie Carlson, Clerk