

**BARAGA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**  
**Regular Meeting Minutes**  
**January 12, 2026**

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**CALL TO ORDER:**

Clerk Goodreau called the Regular/Organizational Meeting to order on Monday, January 12, 2026 at 5:00 p.m., Baraga County Courthouse, 16 N. Third Street, L'Anse, MI 49946.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA:**

Clerk Goodreau led us in the Pledge of Allegiance to the United States of America.

**ROLL CALL:**

Clerk Goodreau took roll call with the following results:

Present: James Niemela, District 1, Brad Dakota, District 2, Craig Kent, District 3, William Menge, District 4, and Lee DeLeon, District 5.

Absent: None.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA:**

Commissioner Kent made a motion, supported by Commissioner Menge to approve the Agenda, as presented. On Voice Vote, the motion carried.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

Commissioner Niemela made a motion, supported by Commissioner DeLeon to approve the minutes for the Regular meeting held on December 8, 2025. On Voice Vote, the motion.

**PUBLIC COMMENT-Agenda Items Only:**

Chairman Dakota opened the meeting up for public comment.

**TREASURERS REPORT:**

As presented by Treasurer, Ashley Kristo.

**REVIEW OF CLAIMS AND ACCOUNTS:**

Commissioner Menge made a motion, supported by Commissioner Niemela to approve the BCMH Trustee Per Diem for December 2025 (\$990.00). On Voice Vote, the motion carried.

Commissioner DeLeon made a motion, supported by Commissioner Kent to approve the payment of the Claims and Accounts for the period of December 9, 2025 through January 12, 2026 in the amount of \$46,731.83. On Voice Vote, the motion carried.

Commissioner Kent made a motion, supported by Commissioner Menge to approve the payment of the Prepaid Bills and Trust and Agency Accounts for the period of December 9, 2025 through January 12, 2026 in the amount of \$377,991.80. On Voice Vote, the motion carried.

Commissioner Niemela made a motion, supported by Commissioner DeLeon to approve the Sheriff's Dept. Commissary Account expenditures for December 2025 in the amount of \$5,231.09. On Voice Vote, the motion carried.

#### **UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

The 911 Committee will be meeting on January 27, 2026 to approve a job description for the 911 Director/Emergency Manager. Commissioner Kent made a motion, supported by Commissioner Menge to appoint Sheriff Brogan as Acting 911 Director and Undersheriff Miller as Acting Emergency Manager for another 90 days. On Voice Vote, the motion carried.

#### **ACTION ITEMS:**

Chairman Dakota called for nominations for Board Vice-Chairperson. Commissioner Menge nominated Commissioner Kent. Chairman Dakota made a second call for nominations. No new nominations were presented. Chairman Dakota made a third call for nominations. No new nominations were presented. Commissioner Menge made a motion, supported by Commissioner Niemela to elect Commissioner Kent as the Vice-Chairman of the Board of Commissioners for a 1 – year term ending 12/31/2026. On Voice Vote, the motion carried.

Chairman Dakota made the following Board/Committee Appointments:

- BHK Board – Commissioner DeLeon
- Western UP Health Department – Chairman Dakota & Commissioner Menge
- Western UP Substance Abuse and Family Planning Board – Commissioner DeLeon
- Finance Committee (2) – Chairman Dakota & Commissioner Menge
- Personnel Committee (2) – Commissioner Kent & Commissioner Niemela
- Equalization Committee (2) – Chairman Dakota & Commissioner DeLeon
- BC Recreation Committee (board member) – Commissioner Kent
- BCMH Board of Trustee – Liaison (1) – Commissioner Menge

Commissioner Menge made a motion, supported by Commissioner Kent to appoint Commissioner Niemela to the UPRC&D Council for 2026. On Voice Vote, the motion carried.

Commissioner DeLeon made a motion, supported by Commissioner Niemela to appoint Commissioner Kent and Commissioner Menge (Alternate) to the UPWARD Talent Council Board. On Voice Vote, the motion carried.

Commissioner Niemela made a motion, supported by Commissioner Kent to appoint Treasurer, Ashley Kristo as CFO and Clerk, Wendy J. Goodreau as CAO. On Voice Vote, the motion carried.

Commissioner DeLeon made a motion, supported by Commissioner Menge to approve the County Treasurer's depositories as follows:

- Baraga County Federal Credit Union
- Incredible Bank
- Michigan Class Investment Pool

- Superior National Bank

On Voice Vote, the motion carried.

Commissioner Menge made a motion, supported by Commissioner Kent to appoint Cathy Wadaga and Jayne Walbridge to the Baraga County Board of Trustees for a six-year term, expiring December 31, 2031.

Commissioner Niemela made a motion, supported by Commissioner Kent to approve the purchase of a new computer and hardware and update to existing computer for the Prosecuting Attorney's office in the amount of \$3,815.00 to be paid out of the General Fund Technology budget. On Voice Vote, the motion carried.

Commissioner Menge made a motion, supported by Commissioner Kent to approve the Baragaland Senior Citizens, Inc. FY2026 Budget and Contract. On Voice Vote, the motion carried.

#### **REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES:**

No reports received.

#### **INFORMATIONAL ITEMS:**

- BCMH – Board of Trustees, Minutes
- Baraga County Mine Inspector – 2025 Report

#### **RESOLUTIONS:**

Commissioner Niemela made a motion, supported by Commissioner DeLeon to adopt the following Resolution:

##### **Resolution Urging Transparency and A Comprehensive Regulatory Framework for Data Center Development**

WHEREAS, data centers are specialized facilities that house computing and networking systems used to store, process, and manage large volumes of data; and

WHEREAS, the demand for data centers has increased rapidly due to the growth of cloud computing and artificial intelligence, resulting in growing concern nationwide and within the State of Michigan regarding their environmental, infrastructure, and community impacts; and

WHEREAS, Baraga County is committed to responsible growth, fiscal stewardship, and the protection of community resources, including water, energy infrastructure, and land use compatibility; and

WHEREAS, large-scale data centers typically require significant electrical and water resources, which may strain local utility systems, impact utility rates for residents, and create noise, heat, and other environmental or quality-of-life concerns for surrounding communities; and

WHEREAS, thoughtful planning and transparency are essential to ensure that any proposed data center development aligns with the long-term use goals of all planning commissions within Baraga County, infrastructure capacity, and the interests of residents and taxpayers; and

WHEREAS, responsible regulation of data centers should include consideration of appropriate zoning districts, compatibility with surrounding land uses, setbacks from residential or sensitive areas, noise mitigation, screening of mechanical equipment, disclosure of anticipated energy and water usage, workforce impacts, and meaningful community engagement; and

WHEREAS, it is in the best interest of Baraga County residents that any data center development occurs within a clear and comprehensive regulatory framework that protects public resources, ensures transparency, and prevents unintended financial or environmental consequences;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Baraga County Board of Commissioners urges all relevant local governmental units, planning authorities, and electric utility providers serving Baraga County to develop and implement a comprehensive regulatory framework governing proposed data center development; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Baraga County Board of Commissioners encourages transparency and public disclosure regarding any proposed data center project, including but not limited to the following information being made available to local officials and the public:

- The source of electrical power for the facility and its consistency with state and local clean energy goals;
- The anticipated water usage of the facility, including daily, monthly and annual demand, and plans to mitigate impacts on water quality and availability;
- How electric utilities intend to meet increased load demands without shifting costs to existing ratepayers or creating stranded infrastructure;
- What contractual protections, minimum usage requirements, or exit provisions will be in place to ensure local residents are not financially burdened if a project is reduced or abandoned; and
- What measures will be implemented to ensure environmental compliance, equitable cost allocation, and meaningful community benefit.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Baraga County Clerk is directed to transmit a copy of this resolution to all municipalities within Baraga County, including Arvon Township, Baraga Township, Covington Township, L'Anse Township, Spurr Township, the Village of Baraga and the Village of L'Anse; relevant state and federal legislative offices; and electric utility providers serving Baraga County.

On Voice Vote, the motion carried.

Commissioner Menge made a motion, supported by Commissioner Kent to adopt the following Resolution:

Resolution in Support of Michigan House Bills 5152 and 5153

WHEREAS, the Office of the Register of Deeds is charged with maintaining accurate, accessible, and secure land records that form the foundation of real property ownership, economic development, and public trust in local governments; and

WHEREAS, predatory practices have been identified where third-party firms target vulnerable residents who are facing mortgage foreclosure and convince them to sell either their property or their statutory rights to surplus foreclosure proceeds and redemption for a fraction of the true value, often stripping residents of tens of thousands of dollars in home equity; and

WHEREAS, House Bills 5152 and 5153 have been introduced in the Michigan Legislature to amend the Revised Judicature Act of 1961, providing critical protection for homeowners during mortgage foreclosure proceedings; and

WHEREAS, House Bill 5153 would directly stop this predatory model by making a mortgagor's right to surplus money and right of redemption non-assignable and non-transferable after a notice of foreclosure is recorded, except through legitimate testate or intestate succession; and

WHEREAS, House Bill 5152 would further protect homeowners by requiring a mandatory "Notice of Rights" for any conveyance of property after a foreclosure notice is recorded, ensuring the seller fully understands they are waiving their rights to redemption, occupancy, and surplus proceeds; and

WHEREAS, the Michigan Association of Registers of Deeds recognizes that one of the roles of the Register of Deeds Office is to protect the property rights of the public and recognizes House Bills 5152 and 5153 are securing said rights.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Michigan Association of Registers of Deeds fully supports House Bills 5152 and 5153, which will protect State of Michigan residents from foreclosure fraud, preserve home equity for families, and reduce the burden on local government resources.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Baraga County Board of Commissioners are also in support of House Bills 5152 and 5153 which will safeguard Baraga County's residents during the foreclosure process and lessen the strain on county resources.

On Voice Vote, the motion carried.

**COMMISSIONERS COMMENTS:**

Commissioner Menge reported that he attended the UP911 Meeting and another one will be held during the UP Commissioners conference in May 2026.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

No Public Comments received.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

There being no further business to come before the County Board, Commissioner Menge made a motion, supported by Commissioner Niemela to adjourn the meeting until Monday, February 9, 2026. On Voice Vote, the motion carried.

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Brad Dakota, Chairman

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Wendy J. Goodreau, Clerk