

BARAGA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
Regular Meeting Minutes
December 9, 2024

CALL TO ORDER:

Chairman Eilola called the Regular Meeting on Monday, December 9, 2024 at 5:00 p.m., in the Circuit Courtroom, Baraga County Courthouse, 16 N. Third Street, L'Anse, MI 49946.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA:

Chairman Eilola led us in the Pledge of Allegiance to the United States of America.

ROLL CALL:

Chairman Eilola instructed Clerk Goodreau to take Roll Call with the following results:

Present: Gale Eilola, District 1; Brad Dakota, District 2; Craig Kent, District 3; William Menge, District 4.

Absent: Chad Cichosz, District 5.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Commissioner Menge made a motion, supported by Commissioner Dakota to approve the Agenda, with the following amendments; m: Jury Commission, Resignation, n: Baragaland Senior Citizen, Inc. (budget), o: Proclamation (Gale Eilola). On Voice Vote, the motion carried.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Commissioner Menge made a motion, supported by Commissioner Kent to approve the minutes for the Regular Meeting and Closed Session held on November 4, 2024. On Voice Vote, the motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENT-Agenda Items Only:

TREASURERS REPORT:

As presented by Treasurer, Jill C. Tollefson.

REVIEW OF CLAIMS AND ACCOUNTS:

Commissioner Menge made a motion, supported by Commissioner Kent to approve the BCMH Trustee Per Diem for November 2024 (\$1,290.00). On Voice Vote, the motion carried.

Commissioner Dakota made a motion, supported by Commissioner Kent to approve the payment of the Claims and Accounts for the period of November 5, 2024 through December 9, 2024 in the amount of \$68,229.15. On Voice Vote, the motion carried.

Commissioner Kent made a motion, supported by Commissioner Dakota to approve the payment of the Prepaid Bills and Trust and Agency Accounts for the period of November 5, 2024 through December 9, 2024 in the amount of \$423,957.67. On Voice Vote, the motion carried.

Commissioner Menge made a motion, supported by Commissioner Kenta to approve the Sheriff's Dept. Account expenditures for November 2024 in the amount of \$18,390.09. On Voice Vote, the motion carried.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

ACTION ITEMS:

Commissioner Dakota made a motion, supported by Commissioner Menge to appoint Nicholas Lindemann to the Baraga County Road Commissioner for a term to expire December 31, 2030. On Voice Vote, the motion carried.

Commissioner Menge made a motion, supported by Commissioner Dakota to accept the resignation of Chad Cichosz, District 5 from the Baraga County Board of Commissioners, effective immediately. On Voice Vote, the motion carried.

Commissioner Dakota made a motion, supported by Commissioner Menge to table the contract with OTIS Elevator for the modernization of the elevator at the Courthouse until further information could be gathered. On Voice Vote, the motion carried.

Commissioner Dakota made a motion, supported by Commissioner Kent to adopt the following resolution:

RESOLUTION TO SHARE FUNDING COSTS OF 97th DISTRICT COURT PERSONNEL

WHEREAS, the 97th District Court, is a district of the first class and its jurisdiction extends to the boundaries of the Counties of Baraga, Houghton, and Keweenaw, in the State of Michigan;

WHEREAS, each county comprising the district is responsible for maintaining, financing and operating the district court within its respective county, pursuant to MCL 600.8103(1);

WHEREAS, one or more district funding units within any district may agree among themselves to share any or all of the expenses of maintaining, financing, or operating the district court, pursuant to MCL 600.8104(3);

WHEREAS, the 97th District Court Administrator provides comprehensive service to the Court in Baraga County, by hiring and training personnel, overseeing compliance with the State Court Administrator's Office, Secretary of State, and other governmental entities, maintaining financial integrity, ensuring consistency amongst the three courts, and supervision of all court employees, amongst various other official responsibilities;

WHEREAS, since the creation of the position, the County of Houghton has solely borne the financial obligations of the salary and benefits of the District Court Administrator, despite the position's duty to oversee operations in both Baraga and Keweenaw counties;

WHEREAS, in the interest of fairness, the respective funding units desire to share the costs of the salary and benefits of the District Court Administrator in the following percentages:

Houghton County 91%

Baraga County 7%

Keweenaw County 2%

WHEREAS, the Administrator's salary and benefits shall be determined by the Houghton County Managerial/Professional Compensation Schedule;

WHEREAS, each County funding unit has already provided for this financial commitment in its approved 2024-2025 budget for the 97th District Court;

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the County of Baraga, funding unit for the 97th District Court, hereby agrees to henceforth assume 7% of the financial responsibility for the salary and benefits of the 97th District Court Administrator.

On Voice Vote, the motion carried.

Commissioner Menge made a motion, supported by Commissioner Kent to approve the 2025 Meeting Schedule as follows:

January 13, 2025 (Organizational Meeting)
February 10, 2025
March 10, 2025
April 8, 2025
May 12, 2025
June 9, 2025
July 14, 2025
August 11, 2025
September, 2025
October 7, 2025
November 10, 2025
December 8, 2025

On Voice Vote, the motion carried.

Commissioner Dakota made a motion, supported by Kent to approve the contract with Sanders & Czapski Associates for engineering services for Phase III of the Point Abbaye Park Improvement Plan. On Voice Vote, the motion carried.

Commissioner Kent made a motion, supported by Commissioner Menge to approved the contract amendment with MGT Impact Solutions, LLC for the 2024 and 2025 Cost Allocation Plan. On Voice Vote, the motion carried.

Commissioner Dakota made a motion, supported by Commissioner Kent made a motion to table the appointment to the Copper Country Mental Health Services Board until the new Board is sat in January. On Voice Vote, the motion carried.

Clerk Goodreau explained that with the December 31, 2024 deadline coming for ARPA funds a few adjustments to the ARPA fund allocations needed to be approved.

Commissioner Dakota made a motion, supported by Commissioner Kent to make the following amendment: that \$85,124.64 of the total approved amount, \$98,318.00, for the Sheriff's Department software (approved on 3/11/2024) should be paid from ARPA instead of the LATCF. On Voice Vote, the motion carried.

Commissioner Menge made a motion, supported by Commissioner Dakota to make the following amendment: the \$200,000.00 ARPA allocation, approved on 12/12/2022 for Parks and Recreation is reduced to \$130,000.00 which is the match requirement for the MDNR grant for Point Abbaye. On Voice Vote, the motion carried.

Commissioner Menge made a motion, supported by Commissioner Dakota made a motion to approve the appointment of Mike Stafford, Bates Township Supervisor, to the Township Elected Official position on the Western U.P. Materials Management Planning Committee. On Voice Vote, the motion carried.

Commissioner Menge made a motion, supported by Commissioner Kent to the Marcus Ladd Trust for the incredible generous donation of land in Arvon Township but respectfully decline

the offer. On Voice Vote, the motion carried.

Commissioner Kent made a motion, supported by Commissioner Dakota to close the Courthouse/Administration Building on Monday, December 23, 2024 from 12:00 – 4:00 p.m. to allow the employees to hold their annual Christmas party. On Voice Vote, the motion carried.

Commissioner Dakota made motion, supported by Commissioner Kent to accept the resignation of Kathryn Edwards from the Baraga County Jury Commission. On Voice Vote, the motion carried.

Commissioner Menge made a motion, supported by Commissioner Kent to accept and place on file the Baragaland Senior Citizens, Inc. 2025 budget. On Voice Vote, the motion carried.

Commissioner Dakota read a Proclamation of Service to Chairman Gale Eilola. The group all thanked Gale for his dedicated service to the County and the community. Thank you, Gale!!

REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES:

Commissioner Kent provided an update on the Snow Belt Rail Authority and Western UP Materials Management Planning Committee.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS:

BCMH, Board of Trustee, Minutes

RESOLUTIONS:

Commissioner Dakota made a motion, supported by Commissioner Menge to adopt the following resolution:

WHEREAS, the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) is requiring Michigan counties to develop new waste handling procedures to ensure sustainable waste management practices for the future; and

WHEREAS, the BARAGA County Board of Commissioners recognizes the need to support alternative solutions to traditional landfilling and waste disposal methods, particularly those that contribute to environmental sustainability; and

WHEREAS, the development of a Waste-to-Renewables facility by PenWin Industries LLC represents a forward-thinking solution that aligns with Governor Gretchen Whitmer's green energy initiatives and Michigan's commitment to a greener, more sustainable economy; and

WHEREAS, the BARAGA County Board of Commissioners seeks to support green industrial development that creates median-wage earning jobs, promotes economic growth, and reduces our reliance on non-renewable energy sources; and

WHEREAS, the establishment of a Waste-to-Renewables facility will encourage infrastructure investment and development, creating an industrial base that will have long-term benefits for the economy of the Upper Peninsula; and

WHEREAS, PenWin Industries LLC has committed to working with all Upper Peninsula counties to promote regional collaboration and to ensure that the economic and environmental benefits of this project are shared across the region; and

WHEREAS, the success of this project is closely tied to the preservation and enhancement of critical rail infrastructure, including the Escanaba and Lake Superior (E&LS) rail line and the Route 8 corridor, which are vital for transporting materials and products to and from the facility, as well as supporting the broader industrial needs of the region; and

WHEREAS, a strong and unified approach among all 15 counties in the Upper Peninsula will strengthen our ability to attract state, federal, and private investment, ensuring the long-term viability and success of the Waste-to-Renewables project;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the BARAGA County Board of Commissioners fully supports the development of PenWin Industries LLC's Waste-to-Renewables facility as an essential step toward creating a more sustainable future for the Upper Peninsula, while addressing both environmental and economic goals; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the BARAGA County Board of Commissioners acknowledges the importance of preserving and enhancing rail infrastructure as a key component in ensuring the logistical success of this project and supporting broader economic development in the Upper Peninsula; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that copies of this resolution be transmitted to the Governor of Michigan, the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE), the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), Upper Peninsula legislators, and other relevant stakeholders to demonstrate our collective support for this critical project.

On Voice Vote, the motion carried.

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

WHEREAS, the Region 11 Area Agency on Aging has served the fifteen-county region Upper Peninsula as the primary provider of options counseling, State Health Insurance Program (SHIP) and Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Program for this community, serving a fifteen-county region of the Upper Peninsula, including Baraga County.

WHEREAS, every year, the Region 11 Area Agency on Aging and their partners in each county help Senior Citizens make some of the most important decisions of their lives. These decisions have a profound impact on their health and financial well-being.

WHEREAS, Baraga County opposes bidding out these important services and keeping them within the appropriate Area Agencies on Aging.

WHEREAS, recently the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, ACLS Bureau bid out these services. This change will harm those served by the system. The Baraga County Board of Commissioners opposes these proposals because:

- The Area Agencies on Aging have spent years building an infrastructure of trained counselors and building relationships in their communities and in the SHIP and MIPPA programs;
- This infrastructure would be lost if the bids were in favor of other entities,
- Beneficiaries could lose access to local counselors that they are familiar with and trust;
- SHIP and MIPPA programs are currently serving our Medicare and Medicaid participants without a profit motive or bias towards a particular insurance product, that impartiality could be lost in this scenario; and

WHEREAS, having come through a recent pandemic, and currently dealing with further results of the pandemic, this is no time for a major upheaval of the trusted counselors and institutions some of our most vulnerable populations depend on; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, the Commissioners of the County of Baraga request that our policy makers continue to utilize the already built and existing infrastructure found in our Area Agencies on Aging. These trusted resources have served our communities well. Bidding out these services would destroy years of work, investment, and relationship building.

On Voice Vote, the motion carried.

COMMISSIONERS COMMENTS:

No Commissioners comments were received.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Clerk Goodreau discussed the process to replace Commissioner Cichosz.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business to come before the County Board, Commissioner Menge made a motion, supported by Commissioner Kent to adjourn the meeting until Monday, January 13, 2025. On Voice Vote, the motion carried.

Gale Eilola, Chairman

Wendy J. Goodreau, Clerk