

OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS
KEWEENAW COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
SPECIAL/ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING
January 11, 2021

A special/organizational meeting of the Keweenaw County Board of Commissioners was held on January 11, 2021 beginning at 6:30 p.m. via Zoom due to COVID 19. This special meeting is being held to discuss the proposed sale of the trails property near the Keweenaw Mountain Lodge to Keweenaw Resort.

The meeting and the Zoom information were posted on the door of the Courthouse and on the County website.

Commissioners present: Bob DeMarois, Randy Eckloff, Jim Vivian, Del Rajala, Don Piche.

The organizational meeting was called to order by the Clerk Carlson. Carlson opened nominations for the chairman for the 2021-2022 term. DeMarois nominated Piche for chairman which was supported by Vivian. Clerk asked for further nominations and there being none, a unanimous vote was cast for Piche as chairman. Chairman Piche took over leading the meeting.

Chairman Piche opened the floor for nominations for Vice Chairman for 2021. Vivian nominated DeMarois for vice chairman which was supported by Eckloff. DeMarois nominated Rajala for vice chairman which was supported by Piche. The Clerk did a roll call vote and DeMarois, Eckloff and Vivian supported Rajala as vice chairman which is a majority, and all board members were in favor. Rajala is vice chairman for 2021.

Motion by Rajala supported by Vivian and unanimously carried to keep the current schedule of Board meetings on the 3rd Wednesday of each month. The regular monthly Board of Commissioners meetings will begin at 6:30 p.m.

Motion by DeMarois supported by Eckloff and unanimously carried to approve the agenda as submitted.

Molly Ombrello, attorney for Keweenaw Resort, spoke first. She has been working with KORC and the Trails Club, trying to come up with a conservation easement and a trails easement that would be acceptable to all parties. A consensus has not been reached with KORC regarding the conservation easement. Of the approximate 380 acres in the proposed sale, the building envelope on the east side is approximately 30 acres and the on the west side, about 38 acres. This building envelope in the west area is 100 yards from the center of Garden Brook where Keweenaw Resort would be primarily looking to put in horse stables, an educational building and perhaps some off grid cabins and parking. The east area of about 30 acres would be for the snow terrain park. These 70 acres of the building envelope would be excepted from the conservation easement that would be on the rest of the 380 acres.

Gina Nicholas, a representative of KORC, spoke and disagrees with the amount of land that is being requested in the building envelope. Gina had about 13 acres in the envelope, not 70 acres. KORC was set up to bring land into the public trust for recreation and conservation, not to bring it out of the public trust which this sale proposal does. Gina feels that the county is not doing the right thing if we sell this land to Keweenaw Resort and allow that 70 acres to be open to building. Gina said that they will not agree or disagree until the whole body of agreements are complete.

County Attorney Chuck Miller spoke and stated that these two parties may not ever agree but it would come down to what the Board wants to see for development or conservation.

John Mueller, owner of Keweenaw Resort also spoke. John said that he does not plan to fill the 70 acres with buildings, but he wants options so that when he puts something up, he does not disrupt a small stream or disrupt nature. He wants buildings put there in a sensible manner and he wants to keep this as a wilderness resort where buildings don't disrupt the environment.

The Board voiced their opinions and then the meeting went to public comment.

Public comment was received.

County attorney Miller said that although Gina Nicholas of KORC had raised some specific concerns, the big question is if the Board will support Keweenaw Resort with the larger building area or if they will support KORC with the smaller building area. That is the question that must be answered before

anything can be discussed further. This is not a legal issue, but a Board decision based on economic development versus conservation.

Motion by Rajala supported by Vivian with all commissioners in favor except Eckloff who voted NO in the decision for support Keweenaw Resort's proposal which would allow a larger building area of approximately 70 acres.

With that decision being made, other things can be negotiated.

Gina Nicholas thanked county attorney Miller and said that KORC will move forward and keep negotiating with Keweenaw Resort concerning the conservation easement.

Nathan Miller from the Copper Harbor Trails Club also appreciated the help from everyone and said that the Trails Club and Keweenaw Resort are very close on trail easement negotiations.

Time was allowed for public comment.

There being no further business, motion by DeMarois to adjourn at 7:53 p.m. Meeting adjourned.

Donald Piche, Chairman

Julie Carlson, Clerk